Speciality Regional Foods in the UK: an Investigation from the Perspectives of Marketing and Social History

by

Angela Tregear

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No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for any other degree or qualification from this, or any other, University or institute of learning

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"Just at the moment when food has become plentiful thanks to an incredible assortment of products and unprecedented purchasing power, our relationship with it paradoxically has become more distant. We know not whence it comes, nor when or how it has been made."

(Massimo Montanari, 1994)

Abstract

This thesis concerns an investigation of the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK, by examining the products themselves as well as the producers who bring them to the marketplace. Speciality regional food production is making an increasingly important contribution to the economy and is pertinent to newly evolving policy objectives in the agrifood and rural sectors at both national and European Union levels. In spite of this, many uncertainties exist with respect to the properties of speciality regional foods and the characteristics and behaviour of the producers of these foods. In the literature review, territorial distinctiveness in foods is identified as comprising geophysical and human facets, these being influenced over time by macro-environmental forces such as trade and industrialisation. Territorial distinctiveness is also identified as comprising a range of end product qualities perceived by consumers. In terms of speciality regional food producers, the literature review identifies that such producers tend to be small or micro-sized firms incorporating some level of hand-crafted methods in their production processes. These characteristics imply complex behavioural tendencies, particularly in relation to the propensity of these producers to be market oriented. The weight of evidence suggests that small craft-based producers have characteristics and tendencies not conducive to market oriented behaviour.

In the empirical study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 speciality regional food producers based in the north of England, with data analysis following a grounded theory approach. In terms of the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods, it was found that interviewees expressed varying levels of conviction regarding the existence of geophysical and human facets of territorial distinctiveness in their products. Furthermore, a variety of contrasting end product qualities were described. These variations and contrasts were explained with reference to the competitive contexts of the interviewees and the social history of the products respectively. In terms of speciality regional food producers it was found that contrary to expectations, these producers

displayed a combination of highly market oriented, entrepreneurial and 'craft' dispositions, with a particular tendency emerging whereby strong evidence of market-orientation and entrepreneurship was partnered with a keen-ness amongst the interviewees to *portray* themselves as 'craftspersons'. This tendency was explained with reference to the competitive circumstances and prevailing market conditions in which interviewees found themselves. Overall, it is concluded that speciality regional foods have meaning at an 'essential' as well as a 'projected' level, and that both need be taken into account for regional food policy initiatives to be effective. For speciality regional food producers, it is concluded that multiple tendencies and behaviours co-exist within these producers, and that it is the producers' prioritisation between these which determines the appropriateness of current policy support mechanisms.

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Contents

Chapter 2: Speciality Regional Foods: the Product

Chapter 3: Speciality Regional Foods: the Producers

Chapter 5: Conceptualisations of Speciality Regional Food Products: Results and Discussion

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Opening Statement

This thesis comprises an investigation of the marketing of speciality regional foods in the UK today, seeking to examine and explain the offerings of such products by placing them within their social historical context and by relating them to the behaviours and decisions of the producers who bring them to the marketplace. The purpose of this Chapter is to set the scene for this investigation by introducing the subject matter and the nature of the research problem, and by explaining the broad investigational approach adopted. To this end, the Chapter begins with an introduction to the popular conceptualisation of speciality regional foods, together with an overview of their economic importance and policy context. This is then followed by an account of the emergent issues which render the marketing of speciality regional foods worthy of investigation, culminating in a statement of the key research questions to be addressed by the thesis. The penultimate sections of the Chapter go on to outline the broad theoretical context and investigational approach adopted to undertake the research, highlighting the combination of both sociological and marketing approaches. Finally, the Chapter concludes with an account of the structure of the thesis incorporating a brief, chapter by chapter, description of its contents.

1.2 The Popular Conceptualisation of Speciality Regional Foods

First, what is meant by the term 'speciality regional food'? Although a key aim of this whole investigation is to address such a question - which would render tight definitions inappropriate and undesirable at this early stage - it is helpful nevertheless to sketch out the type of foods which represent the subject matter of the research. In recent years in the UK and Europe, it has been possible to observe individuals and groups related to the agrifood sector (i.e. policy-makers, retailers, processors, producers and consumers) distinguishing food products which are perceived to have special characteristics related in some way to their geographic origins. Thus, terms such as 'traditional foods' (e.g. Mason, 1999), 'speciality foods' (e.g. Food From Britain, 1996), 'regional foods' (e.g.

Tregear *et al*, 1998) and 'countryside products' (ERM, 1998) have come into regular use in the food media and in policy documentation. Such terms apparently denote foods which broadly approximate to the French conceptualisation of '*produits de terroir*': that is, foods bestowed with distinctive attributes by local territory, whether this is by virtue of a unique combination of circumstances in the physical environment, or by the employment of particular customary production methods of the local population.

When it comes to illustrating the popular conceptualisation of speciality regional foods, it is often products from rural southern European areas which spring readily to mind: Prosciutto di Parma, Roquefort, Feta, Jerez or Port. Producers of such products, or agencies working on their behalf, will argue that these items have distinctive qualities, due to their area of production, which set them apart from competing products. In UK terms, examples of speciality regional foods may be certain cheeses (Stilton, Wensleydale, Lancashire, Swaledale); processed meats such as sausages, hams or pies (Cumberland sausage, York ham, Melton Mowbray pork pies); processed fish (Craster kippers, Arbroath Smokies); baked goods (Eccles cakes, Bakewell tart, Lincolnshire plum bread, Whitby gingerbread); confectionery (Jeddart Snails, Harrogate Toffee, Pontefract cakes); alcoholic beverages (Worcester cider or perry, Lindisfarne mead) and raw or processed fruits and vegetables (Jersey Royal potatoes, Lythe Valley damsons). In each case, an assertion may be made that the special or distinctive characteristics of these products are linked in some way to the geographic area from which they originate. In addition, these illustrative products also convey notions about methods of production: implicit in these names is the sense of traditional practices developed and honed over time, and also the impression of the present day processes being carried out on a relatively small scale, with a high degree of human inputs. Finally, these examples also illustrate the notion of the resulting end products as special, high value items with above average qualities, worth dwelling upon and savouring. Such is the popular conceptualisation of speciality regional foods.

1.3 Economic Importance of Speciality Regional Foods

Whilst the above section indicates broadly the type of food which forms the subject matter of this study, an initial question which arises is the extent to which such foods carry any significance in terms of their contribution to economic activity. For this, empirical evidence suggests that speciality regional foods represent a small, but growing subset of the total agrifood sector. In the UK for example, DTZ (1999) found that speciality food producers employ nearly 52,000 people, an estimated 10% of the total food and drink sector. This is compared to the employment of an estimated 20,000 people in 1995 (Food From Britain, 1996). Similarly, in terms of annual turnover, the speciality food sector is calculated to be worth £3.6bn (DTZ, 1999) compared to an estimated £3bn in 1995 (Food From Britain, 1996). The economic output of the speciality regional food sector is not inconsiderable therefore. Furthermore, on the demand side, market reports reveal that across a variety of food product categories, the market share of speciality items is increasing. This can be seen, for example, in meats (Mintel, 1993; 1995; Giraud, 1998) and cheeses, where speciality products account for one quarter of the total UK cheese market (Kupiec and Revell, 1998). In other categories too, consumers are reported to be showing willingness to 'trade up' to high value items, and it is found that the vast majority of consumers claim to purchase speciality regional foods (Trognon *et al*, 1998). In spite of starting from a low base therefore, it may be observed that the economic importance of speciality regional foods is growing, both in terms of outputs and consumer demand.

1.4 Policy Context for Speciality Regional Foods

In addition to a developing economic importance, it may also be observed that speciality regional foods, as conceptualised above, are increasingly pertinent to newly evolving policy objectives in the agrifood and rural sectors, at both national and European Union levels. In terms of rural development, the proposals set out by the UK government under Agenda 2000 signal a new vision for the countryside (Lowe and Ward, 1998), where traditional agricultural production is to be linked with other economic activities such as

food processing, tourism, service provision and small-scale manufacturing, in an integrated approach to development. Speciality regional food production may be seen as an activity highly suited to this integrated approach, having potential as a means to link on-farm diversification with rurally situated manufacturing or processing enterprises, the end result being products with a clear tourist appeal. Similarly, from an agrifood policy perspective, speciality regional food production fits in well with the principles underpinning the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy: as farmers are being encouraged to move towards differentiating and adding value to their raw agricultural commodities, one means of doing this is by emphasising the geographic origins of the product, which may be used to allude to notions of quality or speciality in food product attributes. Thus it may be argued that speciality regional foods have an increasingly important role within the changing rural and agrifood policy contexts.

Evidence of this heightened role comes with the observation that speciality and local food products have become the target of a number of specific schemes and initiatives 'on the ground' in the UK, administered by different agencies with remits to support and develop the rural economy and/or agrifood sector. Table 1.1 provides an illustrative overview of some of the highest profile of these national-scale initiatives. Furthermore, an additional array of speciality product and marketing schemes has been launched at regional and local levels, often involving Objective 5(b) funding with matched grants from local authorities and Regional Development Agencies. As an illustration of the volume of such initiatives, the Countryside Agency (1999) identified the existence of 65 separate local product schemes in England alone, administered by bodies as diverse as the National Parks, county and district councils, producer co-operatives, and gourmet consumer groups[1].

[1] To illustrate this further, in the north east of England alone, local product initiatives have been launched by the National Trust (a farm shop at its Wallington estate); Northumberland County Council ('Food From Northumberland'); the Northumbrian Coast LEADER project (the 'Fresh Trading Company'), the Amble Development Trust ('North Sea Traditional Fish') and Hexham livestock farmers' co-operative ('Kingdom of Northumbria Marketing Initiative').

Table 1.1 Examples of UK Policy Initiatives to Support Speciality and Local Products

Initiative	Administering Body	Description
Regional Speciality Food Groups, e.g.: 'Yorkshire Pantry' 'Kentish Fare' 'Tastes of Anglia' 'North West Fine Foods'.	Food From Britain	Co-ordination and financial support of a national network of nine Speciality Food Groups in England, with separate promotional bodies in charge of groups for Wales and Scotland. Each Group operates on behalf of its fee-paying members (all of whom produce 'speciality' foods) as a business support centre, networking forum and collective marketing function, under a territorial umbrella brand name (Food From Britain, 1996).
Eat the View	Countryside Agency	A programme of work and activities funded by the Agency, undertaken in partnership with other bodies where appropriate, to improve the market for local and sustainably produced goods. Particular emphasis is on raising the profile of those products derived from distinctive ecologically and culturally valuable landscapes, and making these more accessible to consumers (Countryside Agency, 2000).
Protected Designations of Origin & Protected Geographical Indicators	MAFF	Represents the UK implementation of European Union regulation 2081/92. This allows regional food producers to 'patent' the names and production practices of their foods where these have special characteristics relating to the geographic area of production (CEC, 1992). Designated producers are protected from competitors 'passing off' goods as the genuine products (Thienes, 1994). Through the patenting mechanism, and 'badge of authenticity' marketing device, the legislation claims to support commercially vulnerable speciality regional food producers residing in disadvantaged rural areas (CEC, 1992: I).
Farmers' Markets	National Association of Farmers' Markets (supported by the Soil Association and Countryside Agency)	A national network of specialist markets dedicated to the showcasing and trading of 'locally produced' food items, bringing producers and end consumers directly together. The National Association provides a co-ordination, advisory and networking role (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000).

The policy initiatives listed in Table 1.1 are of particular interest to the current investigation because they offer a set of 'real world' conceptualisations of speciality regional food products and producers which, given the high profile and authoritative nature of the agencies involved, carry particular weight and legitimacy in the UK context. It is intriguing to see how these policy relevant bodies are interpreting what speciality

regional foods are, and what assumptions they are making about the benefits of targeting them for support. Superficial appraisal of the descriptions of these schemes reveals some common themes, such as the desire to target broadly similar types of product and producer and, in terms of policy tools, the employment of a market mechanism (the use of products' territorial identities to leverage consumer spending) to achieve objectives. On closer scrutiny of each scheme however, somewhat different assumptions are revealed regarding the nature of speciality regional foods products and producers, and the socio-economic benefits which may be derived from their support. The following sections present these, drawing from the agency documentation referenced in Table 1.1.

1.4.1 The Regional Speciality Food Groups

First, in terms of the Regional Speciality Food Groups, it may be seen that this scheme targets 'speciality' producers within regional areas. These are defined as businesses sited within a region producing high quality, added value items which *may* make use of local ingredients and which *may* have essential territorial characteristics, but where these latter aspects are not pre-requisites for eligibility to a Group (Food From Britain, 1996). In terms of how this scheme conceptualises and values the territorial distinctiveness of foods therefore, the emphasis appears to be on the use of territorial identities in individual items, and in Group monikers, as signals of appealing and differentiating product qualities, rather than as guarantees of special, geographically distinctive characteristics in products. In terms of the scheme's approach to producers meanwhile, this appears to be based on the perception that the key value of speciality food producers is in the contribution they can make to the economic output of the UK food and drink sector as a whole, particularly in exports. Producers are characterised therefore as commercially ambitious, growth oriented small enterprises, which the Speciality Food Groups can support and nurture by helping them to access the most lucrative markets for their products. Overall, a strong small business development rationale appears to underpin this scheme.

1.4.2 'Eat the View' and Farmers' Markets Initiatives

In contrast, the Eat the View and Farmers' Markets initiatives aim to target 'local' products: those which are made from local materials by local people, preferably in an ecologically sustainable way, although the end products themselves may not necessarily possess territorially distinctive characteristics (Countryside Agency, 2000). The key objectives underpinning these schemes appear to be the development of shorter supply chains and more localised production and consumption networks, and as such producers' value is couched in terms of their ability to contribution to these chains and networks. Producers themselves are conceived of as engaging, or having the potential to engage, in activities with ecological, social and cultural significance to local areas, over and above the contribution they might make to the wider food and drink sector or rural economy. Thus, the support offered under these schemes involves helping producers to participate in localised supply chains and, in the case of Eat the View, encouraging them to engage in production methods and management practices which maximise ecological and cultural benefits.

1.4.3 Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indicators

Finally, the PDO/PGI scheme has a different means of classifying speciality regional foods again, making much more explicit the need for eligible products to show a special link to territory, with the implied need for production practices to be small-scale, craft-like and ecologically sustainable, though these are *not* pre-requisites to eligibility[2]. Like the Food From Britain scheme, the conceptualisation of producers is that they are somewhat vulnerable, disadvantaged entities in the free market, but highly concentrated, food and drink sector (CEC, 1992: I). However in contrast to the Food From Britain scheme, where the support mechanism to deal with this problem involves assisting producers to realise their own growth ambitions so that they can participate more fully in the marketplace, the designations under this scheme offer a more protectionist mechanism,

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[2] Indeed, as Edwards and Casabianca point out (1997), the famous Prosciutto di Parma has a PDO designation, yet is produced from modern breeds of pigs reared intensively indoors.

'ring-fencing' what are conceived to be fragile, non-commercially oriented producers from unscrupulous (large) competitors who would endanger the integrity of valuable, territorially distinctive products.

1.5 Emergent Issues

Having introduced speciality regional foods as the subject matter of this research, and having outlined the economic importance and policy context of these foods, some issues begin to arise which indicate the ways in which speciality regional foods are 'problematic' and worthy of investigation. These issues, which emerge from observations made about both the products and the producers, have practical commercial or policy-relevant implications on the one hand, and more theoretical, or conceptual ramifications on the other.

1.5.1 The Diversity of Speciality Regional Foods

First, it may be observed that although market research agencies and the food media talk of a speciality regional food 'sector', the evidence presented thus far suggests that this sector is in fact very diverse and internally heterogeneous. For example, from the brief illustration of such foods within a UK context, it may be seen that a wide variety of types of product exist, from animal to vegetable (e.g. Cumberland sausage and Jersey Royal potatoes), fresh to processed (e.g. Lythe Valley damsons and Worcestershire perry), comprised of either singular or multiple ingredients (e.g. Craster kippers and Lincolnshire plum bread), conveying simplicity (e.g. Cornish pasties, Northumberland honey) or sophistication (e.g. Malvern spring water, Morecambe Bay potted shrimps). With such diversity this raises the issue of whether it is meaningful to talk of such foods as a single, coherent sector. Speciality regional foods do appear to have different types of derivation and they also appear to communicate different end product appeals. This diversity signals a need for an in-depth investigation of the true nature of speciality regional foods, which attempts to understand the apparently complex and multiple ways in which territory can influence, or bestow special characteristics on, food products. This would be a valuable

investigation in practical terms because without it, both the food industry and development agencies are likely to rely upon overly broad notions of a speciality regional food 'sector', rendering it unlikely that they will make optimal decisions with regard to these growth products.

1.5.2 Characterisation Issues: 'Speciality', 'Regional', 'Traditional' or 'Local'?

Leading on from the issue of the diversity of speciality regional foods is the issue of their characterisation: if policy-makers agree that such foods are worthy of support, then it is important to distinguish them from other types of product. But how should a meaningful characterisation of speciality regional foods be arrived at? The previous sections describing the UK policy context highlight how terms such as 'speciality', 'regional', 'traditional' and 'local' are peppered liberally across the literature of many initiatives, in spite of the fact that each scheme has a distinct stance towards territorial distinctiveness in foods, based on different perceptions of the value this asset brings to the achievement of the scheme's objectives. As a result, the whole area of the relationship between food and territory requires greater critical scrutiny. How is it, in fact, that foods become 'regional specialities'? What dimensions are at play? For example, how do factors in the physical environment bestow 'special' characteristics on foods? Does the pasture composition on which milk cows forage have a scientifically measurable impact on the organoleptic qualities of resulting cheese, or are the distinctive characteristics determined via a more qualitative, empathic judgement? Alternatively, how can a dimension such as tradition be meaningfully conceived of or understood in relation to food products? In the UK for example, many speciality cheeses (e.g. Swaledale, Bonchester, Cornish Yarg) are recently initiated products, either revivals of extinct traditions, or novelties produced in a craft-based spirit. Other products have their origins in the industrialised Victorian era (e.g. Harrogate toffee, Craster kippers), whilst others are derived from internationally sourced materials (e.g. Cumberland Rum Nicky, Whitby gingerbread). To what extent can any of these products be characterised as regional specialities?

Overall, what the above questions highlight is a number of fundamental uncertainties relating to how the distinctive derivation characteristics of speciality regional foods may be determined, and how the 'special' end qualities of such products may be conceived of or identified. An investigation of such issues would help policy-makers to develop more subtle or sophisticated classifications of speciality regional foods, which in turn would help to pinpoint exactly which social, economic, cultural or ecological benefits, if any, are likely to be gleaned from the support of these products.

1.5.3 The Nature and Profile of Speciality Regional Food Producers

Whilst the above sections have raised the emergent issues relating to speciality regional food products, the discussion presented in this Chapter also raises questions about the nature and profile of the producers of these products. Drawing from what has been presented from the policy context, it would seem that mixed messages are being conveyed about who these producers are and how they behave. Thus on the one hand, Food From Britain portrays speciality food producers as vibrant and ambitious small firms, desirous of reaching out to the most lucrative and potentially far-flung markets. On the other hand, the Eat the View initiative conceives of speciality regional food producers as craftspersons more oriented towards localised supply chains and commercial transactions. The PDO/PGI scheme also encompasses the notion of producers as technique-focused craftspersons, ill at ease with, and in need of protection from, the vagaries of the market. Therefore, who are these people? How have they come to be involved in the enterprises that they run? What is the nature of their mentalities and outlooks and how do they make sense of what they do? To what extent are the alternative conceptualisations of 'growth-oriented business person' and 'introverted craftsperson' accurate? Overall, investigation is needed into speciality regional food producers profile and behaviour, to ensure that (i) the most appropriate enterprises are indeed targeted by policy initiatives for support, and (ii) that the right packages of advice, assistance and resources are being offered.

1.5.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

The emergent issues which have been outlined above have all been described and justified with respect to their practical, commercial or policy-related, ramifications. However, the issues introduced above also have ramifications on a more theoretical or conceptual level. For example, the issue of how to characterise speciality regional foods has relevance to ethnological and sociological debates regarding the role of 'definitions' of phenomena. In particular, it has relevance to the work of authors such as Bérard and Marchenay (1995), Moran (1993) and Amilien (1999), who argue that concepts such as 'territorial distinctiveness' or 'tradition' are not definitively objective, fixed entities, but complex, multifaceted phenomena, the result of representations of the 'truth' proposed by different individuals and parties who have their own interests and agendas. (This is the notion of phenomena as 'social constructions'). As the work of Casabianca and Coutron demonstrates in relation to Corsican ham (1998), the determination of traditional food production is often, in practice, the result of a process of sensitive local political negotiations, where the definitive 'tradition' represents a satisfactory compromise between different interest groups. To understand phenomena such as territorial distinctiveness or tradition therefore, it is necessary to examine the different representations that exist and try to explain them from the point of view of their protagonists. The investigation proposed here will contribute to such debates by giving more insights into the different constructions at work in relation to speciality regional foods.

1.6 Key Research Questions

Having now given an account of the main issues emerging with respect to speciality regional foods, this section now consolidates these into the key research questions being addressed by this thesis. Essentially, they can be split into two kinds: those relating to an investigation of speciality regional food products; and those relating to speciality regional food producers. It should be noted that the investigation of producers serves two functions: first, it is necessary given the current lack of understanding about the

behaviour of individuals and groups in this 'sector'; and second, an exploration of producer behaviour can contribute to a fuller understanding of the nature of the *products*, because these products are the result of the mentalities, perceptions and decisions of the producers.

1. *What are speciality regional foods?*

Overall, a key aim of this thesis is to investigate and understand the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK today. Within this, the research will address the following questions:

(i) *How is territorial distinctiveness bestowed on foods?* In light of conceptualisations of territorial distinctiveness proposed by different UK policy initiatives and schemes, the research will investigate the different ways that geography or territory influence the nature of foods, examining how such foods are bestowed with special characteristics, or become identified as 'regional specialities';

(ii) *What end qualities do speciality regional foods possess?* Given the assertions that speciality regional foods are distinct from other types of food product, the research will investigate the end product attributes of such foods and consider the extent to which they may be thought of as distinctive.

2. *Who are speciality regional food producers?*

A second key aim of the thesis is to investigate the profile, mentality and behaviour of speciality regional food producers. Within this, the research will investigate the following questions:

(i) *What is the nature of speciality regional food production?* In light of the apparent diversity of speciality regional foods, the research will investigate the types of methods and processes employed in the production of these foods, with a view to ascertaining the extent to which they may be thought of as craft-based;

(ii) *What is the mentality and behaviour of speciality regional food producers?* Given conflicting evidence regarding the disposition of speciality regional food producers, the research will examine how such producers think and act with respect to their enterprises, with a view to understanding the perceptions and inclinations which underpin their day to day decision-making.

1.7 Research Approach and Theoretical Framework

As may be appreciated by the statement of research questions for this investigation, the phenomena under study require a cross-disciplinary research approach which is sensitive to the status of these phenomena both as culturally significant items and economic entities. Thus, an approach is needed which interprets the meaning and status of speciality regional foods from the perspective of the historical, societal forces which have combined to create them and moderate the way they are perceived, whilst also interpreting their meaning and status from the perspective that they are the result of more immediate marketing decisions taken by agents to achieve certain economic objectives. The two main theoretical perspectives drawn from therefore are sociology and marketing. The following sections introduce and explain the relevance of these in more detail.

1.7.1 Sociology as a Theoretical Perspective

In broad terms, what a sociological perspective involves is the investigation and examination of phenomena from the point of view of the social and cultural forces which shape behaviour relating to them. Thus, in relation to food, different production and consumption behaviours which may be observed are investigated and explained by placing them within the context of the societies and cultures relevant to them. 'The

sociology of food' has emerged as a distinct field of sociological inquiry, with its origins in the pioneering studies of tribal communities conducted by Mead and Richards (Mennell *et al*, 1992), who identified that food has a symbolic role within human groupings, acting as a vehicle for communication, and also as a means of self-identification. Structuralists such as Levi-Strauss (1964), Barthes (1961), and latterly Douglas (1997), built on this by arguing that it is possible to use food as a 'point of entry' into the understanding of human behaviour: that is, foods, like language, are symbolic of the way that human beings relate to their environments, and so by studying them, it is possible to uncover deep patterns of cognition and affectation. Most recently, developmentalists such as Mintz (1979), Murcott (undated) and Mennell (1996) have modified this thinking with the notion that the nature and meaning of foods, rather than being 'fixed' in time and space, are subject to the vagaries of macro-environmental forces: social, cultural, economic and political. Thus, to truly understand what foods mean in society today, the researcher must trace the effects of these forces and attempt to explain food behaviour with reference to such forces.

This perspective of food as a symbolic item, a vehicle for self-expression, and an item whose form and meaning is subject to macro-environmental forces, is highly useful to the proposed study. As the exemplification of speciality regional foods at the start of the Chapter shows, different types of appeal and association seem to be attached to these products (e.g. simplicity, complexity, sophistication), in spite of their derivation from similar types of raw materials and production processes. This suggests that the products are being imbued with symbolic values, in turn derived from the social and cultural contexts of the individuals and groups allocating these values. An examination of these dimensions could reveal valuable insights therefore. Similarly, the diversity of types of speciality food product suggests that these products have originated and developed in different eras and environments which have been shaped by macro environmental forces. Thus, to investigate the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK today, this thesis will examine the social history of the products, taking account of their potential

symbolic value and the potential influence of social, cultural, economic and political impacts.

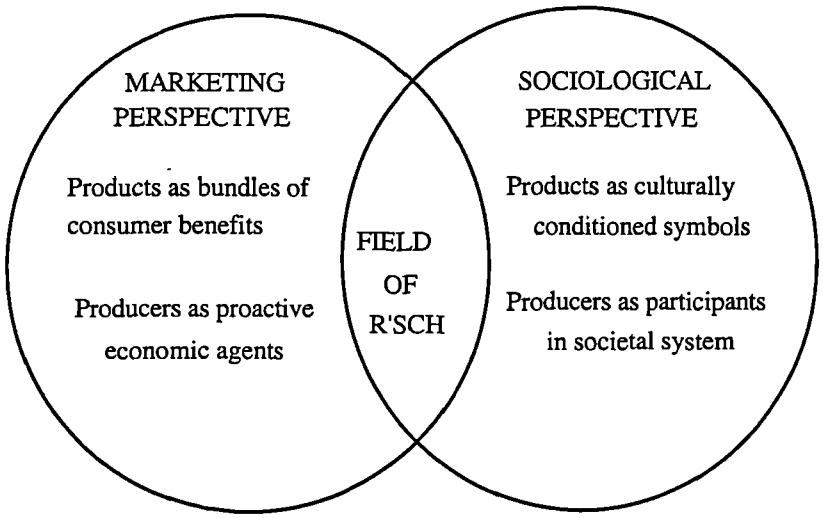
1.7.2 Marketing as a Theoretical Perspective

The second theoretical perspective drawn from is that of marketing. Essentially, a marketing perspective may be thought of as the investigation and explanation of phenomena, such as foods, in terms of their role as exchange commodities: goods passing between producers and consumers. Thus in marketing, the process by which commodities or products are brought to the exchange - the steps and stages underpinning their development and refinement - are focused on, and the products themselves are analysed in terms of the 'bundle of attributes' that they offer to consumers (e.g. Kotler, 1997; Jobber, 1995). Human behaviour itself is understood in terms of the goals that people have in relation to the exchange (Houston, 1986). Crucially, the marketing perspective also encompasses the notion of product meanings and symbols as *manufactured*, the result of deliberate decisions of producers who are trying to pursue their own goals. As such, it is recognised explicitly that there may be a split between the production realities of products, or their true 'essence', and the symbols and meanings that they convey to consumers and society. In other words, there is a split between 'the sign' and 'the signified'. The marketing perspective also recognises explicitly that product natures are the result of decisions made by producers, and therefore are reflections of their outlooks and mentalities.

This perspective is of great relevance to the current investigation because, as has been emphasised, speciality regional foods do exist as exchange commodities in a free market system. Thus their nature and meaning is to be understood not just by contemplating their place in society, both historical and contemporary, but also by examining them as 'bundles of attributes' designed to appeal to consumers. It is also instructive to contemplate speciality regional food producers not just as passive entities being shaped and moderated by macro forces, but also proactive agents capable of making powerful

decisions which may influence their socio-economic circumstances. Figure 1.1 illustrates schematically the dual theoretical perspective adopted for this investigation.

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Perspective of Research



Overall, it is hoped that by adopting the above dual perspective in this investigation, the research will address some of the criticisms of theorists in both sociology and marketing, who point to the limitations of single perspective research, and who argue for more cross-disciplinary approaches. Thus Goody (1982), in relation to sociological studies of food, argues for investigations which take better account of the economic dimensions of food production and consumption behaviour, whilst in marketing, authors such as Hirschman (1983), Brown (1993; 1996) and Brownlie and Saren (1992) argue for researchers to contemplate the wider, socio-cultural significance of market-related phenomena, beyond the role that such phenomena play within economic exchange relationships.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This Chapter has introduced speciality regional foods as the subject matter of this investigation, describing the economic and policy contexts which relate to them. It has outlined the key research questions to be addressed, and it has explained the broad theoretical approach which the investigation adopts. In particular, the adoption of a dual sociology and marketing perspective has been highlighted. The thesis now proceeds as

follows. First, *Chapter 2* presents a review of the literature relating to speciality regional food products, addressing the key questions relating to the nature and meaning of these products, and exploring how territorial distinctiveness is bestowed on foods. The literature drawn from includes social historical studies of food, as well as marketing, consumer and 'country of origin' research. Next, *Chapter 3* presents a review of the literature relating to speciality regional food producers, addressing the key questions relating to the nature, profile and mentality of the individuals and groups who bring speciality regional foods to the marketplace. The literature drawn from here includes that of small business, marketing and entrepreneurship, as well as sociological studies of craft-based firms. Next, having summarised from the literature what is still unknown about speciality regional food products and producers, the thesis proceeds with a description of the primary, empirical component of the investigation (an in-depth qualitative study of 20 speciality regional food producers in the north of England). The research methodology, data collection and analytical techniques employed are explained in *Chapter 4*, whilst *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6* give the results of the primary research relating to speciality regional food products and producers respectively. Finally *Chapter 7*, as the conclusion, draws together the findings of both the secondary and primary research and relates these to the key research questions outlined in this Chapter, summarising what has been learned about the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods and their producers, and contemplating the policy implications of these findings.

Chapter 2: Speciality Regional Foods: the Product

2.1 Introduction

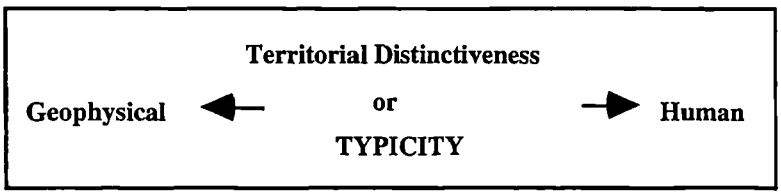
This Chapter considers the social significance and marketing of speciality foods by investigating the nature of the products themselves. In Chapter 1, it was highlighted that a plethora of different kinds of regional foods exist in the marketplace, with different types of origin, production and processing methods, lengths of history, and which communicate various end product attributes. How can this diversity be accounted for? What theories and facts can be referred to in order to explain the variety? How indeed does food relate to territory, and in what ways has this relationship altered over time? The purpose of this chapter is to address these questions, drawing from literature in the fields of social history, food sociology and marketing and consumer studies. First, having discussed the generally accepted elements which link foods to territory, a simple framework is given which classifies these elements and the factors influencing their effect over time. These elements and factors are discussed in detail, drawing from the social historical literature. Within this, the British food inventory of Mason (1999) is used as a key reference. Next, marketing and consumer studies are drawn from to add a further dimension to the understanding of how food and territory are interlinked, with discussion of the impacts of this dimension supported by the food sociology literature. Finally, the Chapter synthesises the key findings of the discussion which will go on to form the basis of primary research.

2.2 The Links between Food and Territory

How is it then that food is related to territory? At a simple level, it may be argued that different foods, like any other manufactured products, are produced in certain geographic locations around the world, either for historical reasons, or through logical economic decisions. This would make food no different to other products in terms of the influence territory has on them. However, as Bérard and Marchenay point out (1995), foods *are* different because of their derivation from agricultural materials which spring directly from

the earth, shaping their form and levels of abundance. In addition, as foods represent the turning of raw materials into edible goods (in Levi-Strauss' terms (1970), the transformation from 'nature' to 'culture'), the production and processing methods employed by local populations to make this transformation also have an impact. Thus, in many studies of food, it is proposed that the territorial influence on food products is twofold: first, through the geophysical nature of the local environment determining the type and quality of raw materials available; second, through the particular methods of food production and processing developed by local peoples to combine, enhance and preserve these raw materials (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness in Foods



In the literature, the assumption is made that it is these two geophysical and human facets which give a food product its territorial distinctiveness or 'typicity'. Put another way, it is these facets which make a food a 'regional speciality'. The following sections now explore these two facets in more detail.

2.2.1 Geophysical Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness

The geophysical environment of a locality includes aspects such as topography, geology, soil type, water courses and climate, which all have a bearing on the abundance of local flora and fauna and the agrifood production activities which relate to them. Thus, at a broad level, dairying and cheese-making are associated with upland pasturing regions, whilst honey production is associated with areas of abundant white clover and relatively low levels of rainfall. The geophysical environment also influences the broad type or style of resulting products: thus in beer-making, the soft waters of the Thames and Lea

rivers in south east England resulted in thick, dark bitter beers of porter and stout style, whereas the hard, calcium sulphate-rich waters of the Midlands and north give rise to brighter, sparkling 'pale ale' types (Burnett, 1999). More ambitiously, it is argued that geophysical facets, at a very specific level, influence directly the flavour and texture qualities of resulting food products. Thus, many viticulturists are convinced of the direct relationship between tiny areas of vineyard territory and the specific qualities of resulting wines, whilst producers of meat and dairy products also argue that specific foraging environments and/or use of indigenous, adapted animal breeds give distinctive qualities to end products. Thus, producers of Herdwick lamb in the Lake District claim that the natural upland foraging environment, rich in heathers and blaeberries, imparts a special flavour to the end meat, whilst cheesemakers in Swaledale and Wensleydale claim that the local flora on which their dairy cows graze imparts a distinctive flavour to their cheeses (Mason, 1999).

Such claims are paralleled by numerous scientific studies attempting to prove or refute the premise that geophysical facets bestow specific organoleptic qualities upon food products. Indeed in the 18th century, "la pédologie" was developed: a science devoted to the evaluation of soils for food production, focusing primarily on viticulture (Bérard and Marchenay, 1995). More recently, work by animal scientists such as Bettencourt *et al* (1998) indicates that protein and acidity levels of cheeses are influenced by the indigenous breeds of milk-producing livestock and the composition of local feeding materials. However, these authors agree with Texeira *et al* and others (1998) that non-geophysical factors such as processing methods can have a much more significant influence on end product characteristics. As Bérard and Marchenay (1995) and Moran (1993) argue, the isolation of geophysical influences increases in difficulty with the number of ingredients comprising a product and also with the complexity of the production process (thus, it is easier with wine and olive oil, but more difficult with cheeses and baked goods). In summary therefore, the geophysical facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods are widely recognised and accepted at a broad level, but in terms of the direct influence of specific

environmental conditions on organoleptic qualities of end products, anecdotal evidence and frequent producer claims are not conclusively supported by scientific studies.

2.2.2 Human Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness

The other means by which territorial distinctiveness can be bestowed on food products is through the human interventions involved in turning raw plant or animal materials into edible items: that is, the cultivation, rearing, production, processing and preservation techniques employed by human individuals and communities to derive nutrition from the physical environment. Amongst these, historians and anthropologists emphasise the importance of preservation techniques as means of extending the life of otherwise perishable sources of nutrition: for example, curing pigmeat to make ham or bacon; separating and drying milk to make cheese, using butter to pot shellfish, the salting and drying of fresh fish. It is also noteworthy that with these human facets is the implication of food production as artisan, from a subsistence, peasant-based agriculture.

Yet how are such practices territorially determined, and how is it that the resulting food products should have typicity or special regional characteristics? The general premise in the literature is that human beings living in different geographic areas develop their own techniques of food production which, passed on through the generations, become customary and habitual: a collective 'savoir-faire' shared within a community (e.g. Mason, 1999). In this way, 'traditions' of food production practices arise, distinctive to local areas. Often, it may be seen that such techniques reflect the circumstances of the geophysical environment, for example, the technique of air-drying ham in areas such as northern Italy (Parma) and southern France (Bayonne), which have prevailing warm, dry winds, or the technique of making 'beremeal bannock' bread on Orkney from the local staple grain of barley (Brown, 1990). In other cases, specific techniques of production reflect the socio-economic circumstances of the livelihoods of the local population: the vegetable, meat and potato combination of a Cornish pasty being a practical way of 'wrapping up' nutrition for local miners (Mason, 1999); the scones and crumpets of

Scotland and the *teisen lap* and *bara planc* of Wales reflecting the girdle-based cooking methods over open ranges prevalent in these areas where enclosed ovens were not widespread until the 20th century (Mason, 1999).

At a more specific level however, it is possible to identify small variations in processing methods for the same commodity which are less easy to explain rationally. For example, the prevalence of techniques of fish smoking along the east coasts of Scotland and England is logical given the importance of fish as a food source to coastal populations (Brown, 1990). But within this, variations in the basic technique can be found: Arbroath smokies are gutted, beheaded and briefly dry-salted before being washed, dried and then smoked for 45 minutes; Finnan haddock are split and dry salted overnight, then smoked for 8-9 hours. The kippering techniques of Craster in Northumberland are different again, the fish being brined very briefly before being smoked for 12-16 hours (Mason, 1999). Whilst it may be difficult to give rational explanations for these various techniques being developed where they did, it is these types of subtle differences in production and processing techniques, apparently reinforced through history into 'traditions', which comprise human facets of typicity. Such traditions may be thought of as highly significant facets of territorial distinctiveness in relation to foods, such as oily fish, which are very simple and widely available, limiting the possibilities of geophysical differentiation.

Finally however, it should be pointed out that although a food may be regarded as territorially distinctive if it contains *either* geophysical *or* human facets of typicity, many speciality regional foods or *produits de terroir* represent the 'intersection' (Mason, 1999) of both facets. Thus it is possible to identify products which have clearly been derived from abundant local raw materials, but which also reflect the socio-economic circumstances of the local population. Examples of these would be the Cornish pasties mentioned earlier, or the Melton Mowbray pork pie: a speciality springing logically from the abundance of suitable raw materials (Leicestershire being a key pig-rearing area), but

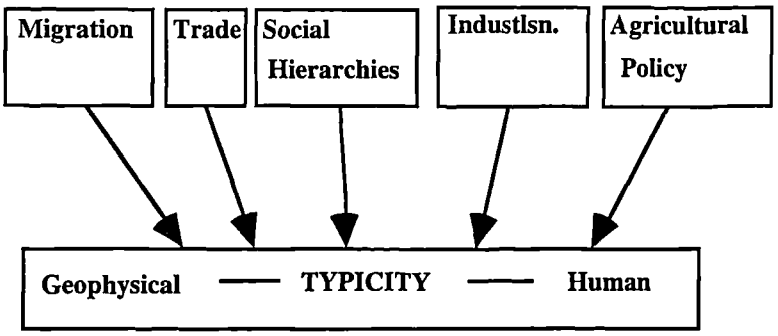
whose shape and form was influenced, in part, by the local aristocratic hunts of the 18th century, which stimulated the need for a convenient, filling, picnic food (Mason, 1999). Therefore, in terms of seeking an answer to the question 'what is a speciality regional food?', the review suggests so far that territorial distinctiveness in a food may be determined by two facets - geophysical and human - but that these facets may appear in varying degrees of emphasis within any particular product.

2.3 Macro-environmental Impacts on Food and Territory

Whilst the previous sections have explored the main means by which food and territory are inter-related, and thus identified the facets which comprise speciality regional foods, it may be appreciated that the nature of these facets is not fixed or static. Though some authors depict an ancient era where regional food was the 'natural order of things' (Montanari, 1994), over time, a variety of factors in the macro-environment (political, economic, social and technological) combine to influence both the geophysical and human circumstances of food production. For example, inter-regional trade or the development of new production and processing technologies can make available different types of raw material within a geographic area, whilst a change in social structures within a local community may make obsolete the lifestyles associated with certain types of food production, encouraging new methods or practices. Overall, an understanding of these forces is essential to any explanation of the form and meaning of speciality regional foods which exist today (Murcott, undated). To undertake this part of the review, literature pertaining to the social history of food is drawn from (e.g. Burnett, 1999; Goody, 1982; Mennell, 1996; Montanari, 1994; Tannahill, 1988). These studies explain the changing habits of food production and consumption by placing them within the context of the social, economic and political circumstances of each era. The information is potentially vast; thus for the purposes of this review five main forces within the macro-environment are focused on: international trade; migration of populations; organisation of social hierarchies; industrialisation; and agrifood policy (Figure 2.2). These factors are

identified as having a specific impact on the *territorial* dimensions of food production and consumption (both geophysical and human), and have particular relevance to the UK.

Figure 2.2 Factors Impacting on Territorial Distinctiveness in Foods



2.3.1 International Trade

One of the most obvious and perhaps straightforward factors impacting on the territorial dimension of foods is the trading of products and commodities across national boundaries. These make new products and ingredients available to food-producing communities living in different geographic areas. Trade of this sort has very ancient origins, for example, the salt routes running from north Africa to southern Europe in Roman times (Tannahill, 1988). However, in terms of impact on food production and processing in different geographic areas, many authors point to the significance of the trans-oceanic voyages of Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries, which caused the 'discovery' of new plant and animal species (Pelto and Pelto, 1983). Potato tubers and maize, both native to Central America, were introduced and taken up amongst the peasant populations of north and south Europe respectively, becoming subsumed into their repertoires of domestically prepared dishes. The polenta of northern Italy - a maize-based porridge - has its origins in this development (Montanari, 1994). Another example of the impact of traded goods is the 18th and 19th century imports of spices and rum from the West Indies to west Cumbrian ports, leading to the production of distinctive local gingerbreads (e.g. Grasmere) and Cumberland Rum Nicky, a latticed tart with a soft filling of ginger, spices and preserved fruits (Mason, 1999).

Importantly, the impact of trade and movement of commodities on food production serves to highlight the fallacy of viewing the geophysical and human aspects of territorial distinctiveness as fixed 'givens'. Examples abound of foods and dishes thought of as native to a territory, yet which are made with ingredients introduced relatively recently: the tomato to Italy in the 15th century (Montanari, 1994), rhubarb to England in the 15th, but not widely grown until the 18th century (Mason, 1999), and olive oil to Provence in the 17th century (Goody, 1982). From this perspective, territorial distinctiveness in foods - in terms of the combination of raw materials used - is subject to change and evolution in the face of international trade.

2.3.2 Migration of Populations

As well as the geographic movement of goods, food production and processing practices are also influenced by the spatial transfer of people. At a micro level, it is possible to imagine this as a continuous process, with techniques and methods becoming gradually diffused throughout neighbouring communities. On a larger scale however, the impact of certain waves of immigration has been more significant to territorially distinctive food production in the UK. Thus in the 12th century, the Normans brought their cider-making skills to south west England, making use of the natural abundance of apples, which had not been processed in this way previously (Burnett, 1999; Twiss, 1999). Also in the 12th century, continental Cisterican monks introduced their cheese-making recipes and skills to various parts of England, in particular to areas of Yorkshire, where Jervaulx and Fountains Abbeys were important sites of their activity. From there, it is thought that local people were instructed in cheese-making methods, continuing the practice after the dissolution of the monasteries but making their own adaptations to suit changing local conditions. Wensleydale cheese, for example, is thought to have such origins (Mason, 1999). More recently, Pelto and Pelto (1983) point to the movement of much larger population groups across the world, such as Italians migrating to north America, Bangladeshis and Indians to the UK, and north Africans to France. In these cases, it is

emphasised that these groups brought with them food practices and ingredients which have since influenced the food habits of local populations.

Put simply, it may be asserted that international trade impacts on geophysical facets of territorial distinctiveness by making available new ingredients and raw materials, whilst population movements make available new techniques of food production and processing. Like international trade, moreover, the migration of populations also serves to highlight how important it is to view the distinctive attributes and methods of food production as fluid and potentially multi-territorial, even when they appear to be fixed to one territory. Rather than being the products of unchanging techniques and practices of communities isolated from the outside world, the literature here suggests it is more useful to think of territorially distinctive foods as the result of long-standing processes of cross-fertilisation of goods, people and ideas from different territories.

2.3.3 Organisation of Social Hierarchies

Another factor impacting on the links between food and territory, though perhaps more obliquely than trade or population migration, is that of the social organisation of peoples within a geographic area or nation. Broadly speaking, from the literature, it appears that social hierarchies can militate for or against the existence of territorial distinctiveness in foods in two ways: first, through the manner in which different echelons within a society procure foods; and second, through the ways in which foods are accorded status by the consumers of that community (the latter following the anthropological notion of food as a symbol of expression of self-identity, and a means by which individuals relate to others).

In terms of the manner of food provisioning by different members of a social hierarchy, it may be appreciated already from this Chapter that many speciality regional foods are items derived from the lifestyles and needs of the rural poor: they are products of a small-scale, subsistence type of agriculture where particular techniques are employed to turn local natural raw materials into edible, preferably non-perishable, nutrition. In societies

where there is an abundance in the population of this type of peasant lifestyle, such as in all European countries in the Middle Ages, it may be argued that territorial differentiation in foods is likely to be found[1]. However, such differentiation is also influenced by the food provisioning patterns of the wealthier echelons. Mennell, for example (1996), argues that food procurement for the French and English aristocracy of the Middle Ages was quite distinct. In France, the absolutist monarchy of the *ancien regime* required the nobility to be deeply subservient to the King, spending much of their time in court in Paris. Their culinary habits were based on a 'centralist' principle of food provisioning, whereby raw materials were sourced from around the country to concoct the definitive dishes and meals of the court. As a result, the culinary habits of the provincial aristocracy were not based primarily on local produce. By contrast, the English aristocracy had more independence from the monarchy and spent more of their time at their country seats, consuming the local produce of their estates. Mennell asserts therefore that greater territorial differentiation in food habits was found in England than in France during this era.

Linked to the impact of social hierarchies on territorial differentiation in food is the status accorded to foods by each element of these hierarchies. If social elites prize the products of certain regions or areas for example, these products will become renowned and special: if not, not. The fortunes of a number of foods has fluctuated over time according to their perceived status: shellfish were once despised in the 12th century, yet came to be regarded as a delicacy in the 19th and 20th centuries (Montanari, 1994). Similarly, the salmon which is so highly prized today was firmly associated with poorer classes in the 18th century (Mason, 1999). In terms of territorial distinctiveness however, a highly significant impact of status appears to have occurred in the Enlightenment era of the 17th and 18th centuries, where the beginnings of a formal codification of culinary practice - or

[1] Some authors go further, to argue that the existence of a stable, landed peasantry is associated with the development of a solid, distinctive food culture: for example, Symons (1982), cited in Mennell *et al* (1992), asserts that Australia has one of the "worst" food cultures in the world because the country evolved rapidly from a hunter-gatherer to an industrialised mode of food provisioning, with no stable period of landed peasantry in between.

haute cuisine - were seen, first in Italy, then more significantly in France. Broadly, most authors agree that prior to this era, the differences between the food habits of the wealthy and the poor in Europe were principally quantitative rather than qualitative (Mennell, 1996; Montanari, 1994; Tannahill, 1988): that is, the wealthy ate greater amounts of food than the poor, but that these foods were of the same type - locally derived and therefore territorially distinctive. With the emergence of *haute cuisine* however, a new set of culinary habits, based on a complex structuring of meals and the centralist provisioning principles of the French *ancien regime*, was presented to the European aristocracy (Mennell, 1996). The cuisine was based on the use of made dishes and sauces derived from a wide variety of diversely (and expensively) sourced ingredients, rather than through the use of locally derived produce or culinary habits.

Haute cuisine quickly became fashionable amongst the European aristocracy, as it was identified with a more sophisticated, refined (and necessarily moneyed) way of life, which set the wealthy elite apart from the lower echelons in society (Mennell, 1996). Many authors (e.g. Brown, 1990; Driver, 1983; Mennell, 1996; Montanari, 1994) attest that the British aristocracy embraced *haute cuisine* with particular enthusiasm, employing French chefs and abandoning their traditional culinary habits based on locally produced foods. Furthermore, it is argued that the bourgeoisie of the 19th and early 20th centuries were also quick to adopt the status-oriented *haute cuisine*, reinforcing the lack of regard for indigenous foods amongst moneyed classes (Driver, 1983). The way in which French culinary culture has been adopted as a status symbol by British upper and middle classes has, it is argued, militated against territorial differentiation in food habits and, through lack of accorded status, has militated against the sustaining and proliferation of territorially distinctive food products.

2.3.4 Industrialisation

Like all the other macro-environmental impacts discussed so far, industrialisation has had a far-reaching impact on territorial distinctiveness in foods in the UK. However, unlike

the others, the influence of industrialisation appears to have been more ambiguous. On the one hand, at a superficial level, it may be argued that the forces of industrialisation strongly militate against the proliferation of the type of small-scale agriculture associated with typical foods, and also militate against territorial differentiation in food consumption patterns. However, at a deeper level of reading of the literature, it may be argued that the socio-economic circumstances of 19th century Britain *did* give rise to distinctive foods linked to specific places and, moreover, created a new type of market environment where territorial specialities were allocated distinct *identities* for the first time. These points are explored in more detail below.

First, there is an argument that industrialisation was a force for destruction of territorially distinctive foods. This centres mainly on the notion, put forward in the previous section, that speciality regional foods are largely derived from a small-scale, peasant style of agriculture, where the production and processing techniques used to turn agricultural raw materials into edible nutrition are non-mechanised, heavily reliant upon human labour and collective know-how developed and passed on through generations. This vision of regional foods also depicts food production and consumption as taking place within close geographic proximity, with the producers of these foods either consuming them for self-sustenance, using them for rent payments in kind, or exchanging them at local markets. With industrialisation however, it is argued that a 'delocalisation effect' impacted on systems of food production and consumption, such that instead of being conducted within close proximity, these activities began to take place at increasing geographical distance from one another (Montanari, 1994). Furthermore, it is argued that both processes of production and consumption, instead of being dependent primarily on the socio-economic environment of the local area, became inter-dependent with the political, social and economic circumstances at a global level (Pelto and Pelto, 1983). Thus the nature of sugar production and refining in the Caribbean in the 19th century was not the result of local population needs, but rather a reflection of the political power of the British

Empire, the existence of the slave trade from West Africa and the growth of consumer demand in industrialising Western markets (Mintz, as discussed by Mennell *et al*, 1992).

What, more precisely, were the elements involved in industrialisation, and how are they seen to have militated against territorially distinctive foods? First, on the production side, industrialisation saw the introduction of increased mechanisation in agriculture as well as the application of science and technology to cultivation techniques and animal breeding. These new techniques and methods were adopted widely by landowners across Britain, leading to the homogenisation of otherwise geographically diverse agricultural practices. Furthermore on the production side, food processing activities such as butter and cheese-making, baking and meat processing began to be conducted on a mechanised scale, often with a very small number of large firms emerging to dominate production. For example in the West Country, cider-making had been conducted on a localised, but qualitatively varied, scale since the Norman introduction of the 12th century, but by the end of the 19th century production was dominated by two large companies, Bulmers and Taunton Cider, who mass-produced an homogenised, mechanised product (Twiss, 1999). In terms of the impact on territorial distinctiveness therefore, homogenisation infers the loss of geophysical facets (e.g. through the use of standardised, non local materials), whilst mechanisation infers the production of foods using methods which do not rely on human manual skills or know-how, that is, the loss of human facets of territorial distinctiveness.

However, in addition to changing the technical nature of food production activities, industrialisation also heralded a change in the lifestyles and food habits of those sections of the population who had been associated with the production of speciality regional foods. With the growth of industrial manufacture, many of the rural poor moved to the developing cities for work. As they did so, they left behind them the techniques and methods of 'peasant' food production and, as Oddy and Burnett assert (1992), became part of a food provisioning and consumption system based largely on industrialised production: collectivised milk, processed, preserved and dried goods. As it has been

asserted in the preceding section that the upper and middle classes of this era based their culinary habits on a French model, it is argued that overall, territorial differentiation in food habits, and the existence of territorially distinctive foods, suffered from abandonment by all levels of British society during industrialisation. Indeed, this combination of changes in the food production and consumption habits of both rich and poor in 18th and 19th century Britain is put forward as one reason to explain why Britain has apparently few regional specialities, while France, where the effects of industrialisation were less severe, has a proliferation (Mennell, 1996; Driver, 1983).

Such are the arguments put forward to explain the negative impacts of industrialisation on territorial distinctiveness in foods. However, close reading of the literature also reveals evidence to suggest that the industrialisation era, whilst not exactly favourable to the production of territorially distinctive foods, did give rise to some regional specialities. First, it is possible to identify a set of products emerging in this era which, though comprised of distantly sourced ingredients and produced in an urban, rather than a rural setting, nevertheless owed their special characteristics to specific historical circumstances. An example of this is Harrogate Toffee (as discussed by Mason, 1999), a type of hard boiled sweet flavoured with lemon. This product was designed by local grocer John Farrah specifically for Victorian ladies to take after drinking the town's famous spa waters, in order to remove their bitter taste. Although produced in the town from non-local ingredients (for example, sugar and lemon), the distinctive flavour and texture of the toffee has it origins in precise, place-related circumstances.

A second set of industrial era products are those which, although the result of mechanised manufacture, also owe their distinctive characteristics to the socio-economic circumstances surrounding their production. Vimto is an example of this type: formulated by Manchester druggist John Nichols in 1908, and containing 29 fruit and herb ingredients, it was originally intended as a health tonic. However, given the strength of the temperance movement at that time in the urban areas of the north west, the drink

gained popularity instead as a healthful leisure drink (Mason, 1999). Like Harrogate Toffee, this product appears to have strong ties to place (in this case, the urban working class areas of north west England), and also, though invented in the 20th century, has its origins in the medieval practice of making herbal cordials for restorative and medicinal purposes (Burnett, 1999). In both types of product therefore, elements of either geophysical or human facets of typicity can be identified, though these foods are far from the common perception of speciality regional foods as the products of peasant agriculture.

The final way in which the industrial era could be seen to have had a positive impact on speciality regional foods is through the creation of market conditions conducive to the appearance of clearly identified, branded products (as discussed by Oddy and Burnett, 1992). In pre-industrial eras, the literature appears to suggest that much production of territorially distinctive foods was haphazard, resulting in individual products of variable characteristics and quality. With the emergence of mechanised, technology-driven production processes however, coupled with commercially oriented businessmen, it seems that products began to appear on the emerging national-scale marketplace, endowed with modern characteristics such as quality specifications and brand identity. For example, many of the plant and animal species perceived in the UK today as 'traditional' and place-rooted - Cox's Orange Pippins and Bramley's apples (Twiss, 1999), Aberdeen Angus beef and Gloucester Old Spot pigs (Mason, 1999) - owe their renown to the 'improving' tendencies of 18th and 19th century agronomists and livestock rearers, combined with the promotional efforts of enthusiastic societies or entrepreneurial individuals. Another example is smoked fish: whilst it has been identified in preceding sections that fish smoking took place all along the east coasts of Scotland and England, it was one John Woodger from Seahouses, Northumberland, who deliberately invented and branded what is now known as the Craster Kipper in the 1840s, explicitly intending the product for the London market (Mason, 1999).

A final, but noteworthy, impact of industrialisation on territorially distinctive foods was in the origins of a trend amongst urban middle classes to appreciate products of hand-crafted, artisan labour, particularly when such products could fit in with the fashionable continental culinary style. As in other product sectors where industrial processes gave inexpensive goods, hand-crafted foods had an expensive cachet. For example, whilst fish pastes were seen as lowly products in Victorian times - industrially manufactured foods derived from the cheapest ingredients - 'potting', the process of hand-preserving shellfish in butter, gave rise to a 'coastal delicacy' (Mason, 1999). Such products also fitted in well with the emergence of tourism, which entailed the purchasing of perceived fancy gift items. Overall therefore, it seems that industrialisation has had a complex and far-reaching impact on territorial distinctiveness in foods.

2.3.5 Agrifood Policy

Like industrialisation, the final macro-environmental impact considered here appears to have had a similarly far-reaching impact, though its effect seems to have been more straightforward: much of the evidence seems to point towards British agrifood policy in the 20th century militating against the existence and development of territorially distinctive foods.

First, is the observation that the mechanisation and technology-driven production processes of the industrial era, so apparently damaging to the existence of speciality regional foods, were supported and encouraged politically. This can be construed as logical, given the status of Britain as an island-based nation keen to ensure self-sufficiency in food and nutrition. These preoccupations were compounded in the early years of the 20th century, when large scale medical examinations accompanying conscription for W.W.I revealed the general state of ill-health and malnutrition within the population (Oddy and Burnett, 1992). This led to an agricultural policy focused on production maximisation and a food policy focused on dietary improvement, through the

application of scientific and technological advancements to dietary advice. Both could be construed as being detrimental to territorial differentiation in foods.

Furthermore, state controlled Marketing Boards were set up to regulate the distribution of agricultural products: this system of food provisioning effectively treated agricultural products as standardised, homogenous commodities, with differentiation - territorial or otherwise - not encouraged or incentivised. In addition, these Boards were accompanied by a widespread perception amongst farmers that any type of on-farm processing (e.g. cheese-making from milk) was forbidden (Mason, 1999). Thus the middle years of the 20th century saw the ceasing of production of a huge proportion of small-scale, on-farm processing activities, especially farmhouse cheese-making, with a great many of today's speciality cheeses being 'revived' only within the last 20 to 30 years. Finally, with the advent of W.W.II, the emphasis on food security increased, putting continued emphasis on production maximisation and standardisation of agrifood products. On the demand side meanwhile, many authors point to the impact of long-term food rationing on the culinary habits of the whole of the UK population: although this is perceived as having an homogenising effect on the diets of rich and poor, it is asserted that the 13 years of existence on a limited variety of foods and ersatz products broke down further the links between (particularly urban) populations and their traditional culinary practices (Driver, 1983; Mason, 1999). Overall therefore, the production maximisation and efficiency based agrifood policies of the 19th and 20th centuries appear to have strongly militated against territorial differentiation in food, and the existence of regional specialities.

2.3.6 Summary

In summary, what can be said about the links between food and territory in the light of this review of macro-environmental impacts? The social historical literature has been illuminating. Whilst a simple picture may be painted of an ancient era where geographic differentiation in food production and consumption was once 'the natural order of things', the impact of macro-environmental forces can be seen to have been prevalent

even from early times. In eras of migration of significant peoples (e.g. Cistercian monks to northern England in the 12th century) and international exploration and trade (e.g. the 15th and 16th century epic voyages), new techniques and new products have appeared in Britain, many of which have become subsumed and naturalised into local production and processing habits. This process is moderated by the ways in which social hierarchies in different communities work: some items become prized and associated with wealth and prestige (such as foods associated with *haute cuisine*), leading to differentiation in food habits by social strata rather than by geography. Industrialisation, furthermore, has a complicated role to play, with forces of mechanisation and standardisation of production, and movement of populations to urban areas all mitigating against territorially distinctive foods, yet within the UK context, these forces are associated with the appearance of certain place-related specialities, and also with the emergence of a commercial marketplace with strongly identifiable, branded products. Finally, agrifood policy within a UK context may be seen to have had a more straightforward impact on territorial distinctiveness in foods, encouraging a socio-economic environment where the emphasis has been on production maximisation and standardisation, and where the predominant food culture is based on the application of industrialised methods and scientific discoveries rather than the appreciation of territorially distinctive raw materials or traditional, human, techniques of production.

2.4 Speciality Regional Foods as Marketable Products

So far in this Chapter, the emphasis in addressing the question 'what is a regional food?' has been on reviewing what the literature says about where territorially distinctive foods come from, and what forces have combined to influence their 'journeys'. It has been identified that territorially distinctive foods have two distinguishing dimensions: geophysical and human facets of typicity, and that these are impacted over time by forces of trade, migration, the organisation of societies, industrialisation and implementation of agrifood policies. Mainly the discussion has focused on what these forces mean for the ability of a food product to demonstrate geophysical and human facets of typicity.

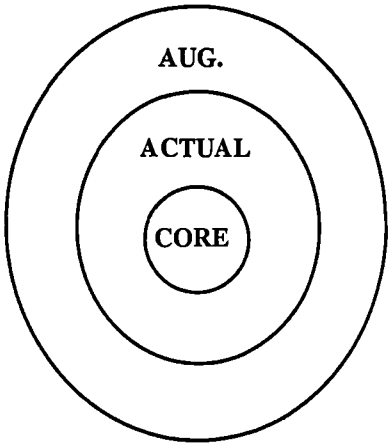
However, in the course of this discussion it has emerged that territorial distinctiveness in foods can be shaped by the purchasers and consumers of foods. For example, in discussing foods as status symbols, it has been noted that where products are highly prized by social elites, they achieve a certain renown or reputation: thus, they become 'specialities' associated with their place of origin. Similarly, in the industrialisation era, it has been noted that it was the efforts to 'brand' certain foods which helped to give these products distinctive identities, again, turning them into place-associated specialities. This notion of territorial distinctiveness as an appealing product feature, attractive to prospective consumers, is derived from the marketing perspective of food products. In this perspective, objects are analysed not in terms of their place in social history, their physical composition, or the techniques of their production, but rather in terms of what they offer and communicate to consumers within an economic exchange transaction. It is from this marketing perspective that the final third of this chapter will seek to address the question 'what is a regional food?'.

2.4.1 A Marketing Perspective of Food Products

First, what are the precise elements of a marketing perspective of food products and what insights can this bring to an understanding of speciality regional foods? Essentially, the perspective takes as its starting point the notion of products as exchange commodities: items offered up by producers to attract the custom of a purchaser, over and above what is offered by competing products. Any speciality regional food therefore, is thought of as a 'bundle of attributes', a set of tangible and intangible features and qualities from which a consumer may derive satisfaction. A simple framework is commonly used to classify these attributes (Figure 2.3). What this framework proposes is that at the heart of any product is a set of *core* benefits: these represent the fundamental reasons why a consumer purchases a particular product, the sources of 'need satisfaction'. In typical food products these may involve, for example, the simple satisfaction of hunger, the hedonistic enjoyment of distinctive flavours, or the ability to impress a peer group with a demonstration of culinary knowledge and good taste. At the *actual* level, there are the

physical and tangible attributes such as product texture, appearance, packaging and brand name: all the product features which can be recognised and perceived through the five senses, and which can be adjusted to communicate certain core benefits. For example, a bottled beer packaged in a screw-top vessel with a hand-written label communicates different types of core benefits to one packaged in more elaborate materials. Finally, there is the *augmented* product level: all the additional service features which are conducive to the purchase of the product and its core benefits. In terms of speciality foods, these may include things like assurance of a direct relationship between the producer of the product and the end consumer, or the provision of product guarantees.

Figure 2.3 A Marketing Perspective of Products



With respect to the question of 'what is a speciality regional food?', this marketing perspective of products gives rise to two important points. First, there is the novelty of analysing a territorially distinctive food not in the scientific terms of its composition, nor in the social historical terms of its production and use, but rather in terms of the end product qualities it offers the consumer. Such a perspective is extremely valid for a set of products which exist within a competitive marketplace: to appreciate and understand their meaning and value, the perceptions of the consumers which give them their value must be taken into account. Second, and leading on from this point, is the notion that consumers, drawing from what is communicated to them through the actual product level, project

onto products *their* understanding of what these products are and what they represent, irrespective of the reality underpinning the product (as highlighted by Trognon, 1998). In terms of territorial distinctiveness therefore, consumers may make judgements about the nature of geophysical and human facets as they perceive them within a product, which may be at odds with the essential product history. Furthermore, the marketing perspective also highlights that producers can adjust and manipulate the actual product level to communicate 'truths' which may be likewise at variance with the essential product history (as discussed by Amilien, 1999 and Tregear *et al*, 1998). The marketing perspective therefore introduces the notion of territorial distinctiveness as a fluid, imagined entity, subject to the manipulations and interpretations of the individuals involved in speciality regional food production and consumption.

2.4.2 Consumer Perceptions of Speciality Regional Foods: 'Country of Origin' Studies

So what is the nature of these intangible end qualities which are attached to speciality regional foods? What indeed are the perceptions of consumers with regard to these products? One obvious area of literature to turn to for answers to these questions is 'country of origin' research: a popular and long-standing field of consumer research which investigates how the indication of place (usually country) of origin on a product label impacts on consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour. This literature suggests, for example, that consumers have preferences for products of their own country or region, that is, they display 'ethnocentric' behaviour (Guerro *et al*, 1998; Wirthgen *et al*, 1998), and that country of origin can be used as a cue to infer product quality when a consumer is unfamiliar with a product category (Han, 1989).

However, despite the vast array of empirical studies which exist in the field of country of origin research (e.g. Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Eroglou and Machleit, 1989; Gaedeke, 1973; Kaynak and Cavusgil, 1983), much of this literature is in fact of limited use to the analysis of consumer perceptions of territorially distinctive foods. First, very few of these studies have been conducted specifically on food products: given the special and

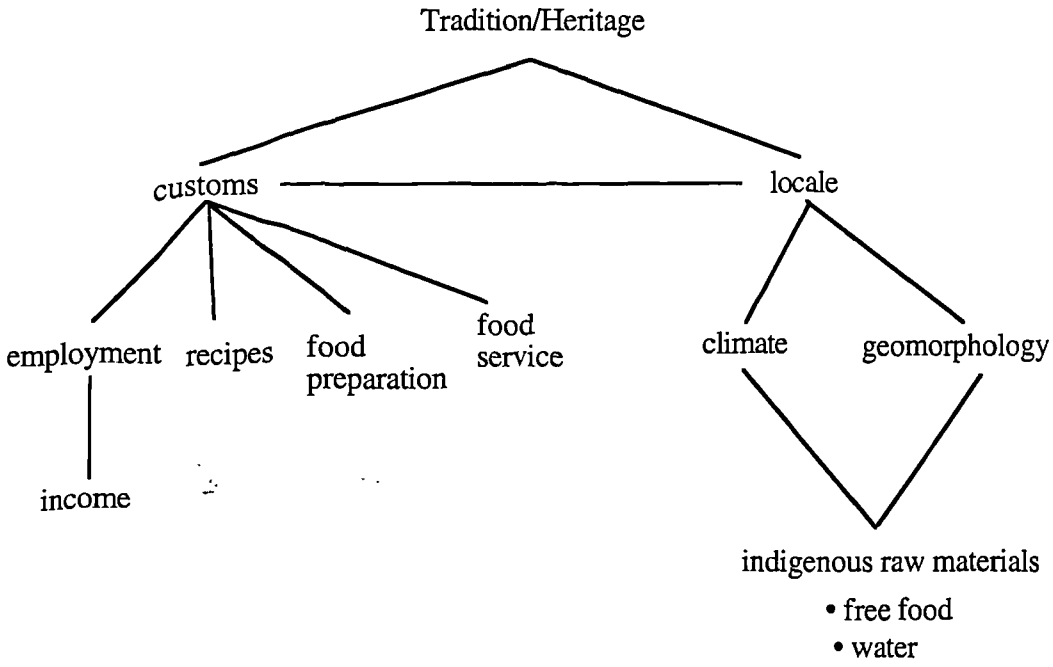
distinctive way in which foods are associated with territory, with all the accompanying complexities, it would appear over-ambitious to try to extrapolate too enthusiastically from the results of non-food studies (Skaggs *et al*, 1996). Second, even amongst those studies which have focused on food products (e.g. Howard, 1989) - and indeed those which have included specified *produits de terroir* in their investigations (e.g. Alvensleben and Schrader, 1998; Giraud, 1998) - the dominant approach has been to employ multivariate techniques such as factor and conjoint analysis to explain consumer perceptions. As Verlegh and Steenkamp point out (1998), such methods may be useful in indicating the relative effect of different product variables on consumer perceptions (e.g. taste, texture, quality, price), but they give little insight into how these perceptions have been arrived at.

2.4.3 Consumer Perceptions of Speciality Regional Foods: A Qualitative Study

A more in-depth approach was taken however by Kuznesof *et al* (1997) in their study of consumer perceptions of 'regional' and 'northern' foods in the UK. Recognising that food and territory may be linked together in complex ways, and that the nature of consumer perceptions of these links is likely to reflect this complexity, the researchers employed a qualitiative methodology to allow research participants to express their perceptions and experiences more fully and in their own words. A series of eight focus groups was conducted, in which participants were asked to give examples of 'regional' foods, then discuss in depth their perceptions and behaviour relating to such foods. Overall, consumers were found to attach a substantial variety of meanings to the term 'regional food', and a number of complex associations was found to underpin these. For example, regional foods were described as being *'foods specific to a country, region or area'*, *'products suited to a climatic area'*, and the *'free food'* of an area. Regional foods were also associated with certain types of lifestyle, being described as *'old-fashioned food'*, *'poorer people's food'*, and *'home-cooked food'*. To consolidate this variety of perceptions, the authors propose a hierarchical construct of concepts and ideas (Figure 2.4). This identifies that the dimension of tradition or heritage in regional food - the

dimension which distinguishes regional food from other types of food - is derived from a combination of custom- and locale-related features. Thus, the use of particular recipes and/or methods of food preparation and service are custom-related means by which a food may be perceived as regional. Particular climatic conditions or soil types, meanwhile, constitute the more geophysical or locale-related means by which a food may be perceived as reigonal.

Figure 2.4 Factors Relating to the Tradition and Heritage of Regional Food.



One of the striking things about this construct of consumer perceptions is its resemblance to the depiction of territorial distinctiveness given at the start of this Chapter, whereby typicity in foods is seen to be comprised of geophysical and human facets. At a basic level therefore, it would appear that consumers appreciate the 'essential' characteristics of regional food products. However, this study also highlights the variety and complexity of other meanings attached to regional foods, which suggests that perceptions of the end product qualities of these foods are varied and complex. Indeed, Kuznesof *et al* go on to find that regional food products are sometimes perceived as gourmet specialities,

sometimes as natural and free from additives, sometimes as rather basic and stodgy foods. Clearly, there are many perceptions at play here.

Although the above research gives more insights into how territorially distinctive foods may be perceived by consumers, a solid, comprehensive account of the end product qualities associated with such foods is still lacking. Therefore, to conclude this Chapter, the final sections propose an hypothesised list of such qualities, drawing from the insights gained in this Chapter from the scientific, social historical and marketing literatures. In effect, this list is a synthesis of the key points addressing the question 'what is a speciality regional food?' It proposes that there are five main qualities associated with territorially distinctive foods: 'rustic', 'gourmet', 'natural', 'traditional' and 'local pride'. Each is now described in turn.

2.4.4 Speciality Regional Foods as 'Rustic'

A initial quality which may be perceived within a territorially distinctive product is that of rusticity: for example, in the study of Kuznesof *et al* (1997), it was asserted by consumers that regional foods can be basic, simple items, produced and processed in an inexpensive way by local people of lowly means. This perception has much support in the social historical literature reviewed in this Chapter, as the work of many authors (e.g. Mennell, 1996; Montanari, 1994; Pelto and Pelto, 1983; Tannahill, 1988) has demonstrated how territorially distinctive foods arose from peasant lifestyles and subsistence agriculture. Rusticity is also echoed in the human facet of typicity proposed at the beginning of the Chapter, whereby human inputs are viewed as basic means of extending the nutritional lifespan of local raw materials. Delamont's work (1995) emphasises rusticity even further by highlighting the laborious, messy and often thoroughly unpleasant nature of traditional food production (e.g. the slaughtering, rendering and curing of pigmeat by hand to make ham), portraying it as a binding, inhibiting ritual, particularly for the female members of local populations. As such, both she and Oddy and Burnett (1992) are quick to point out how the ready-processed, mass-

produced convenience foods of the industrialised era were highly prized by such populations, as they offered liberation from a laborious and tedious lifestyle.

2.4.5 Speciality Regional Foods as 'Gourmet'

In contrast however, another quality associated with speciality regional foods, expressed within the literature of this Chapter, is that of their savourable, or 'gourmet' nature. First, Kuznesof *et al* (1997) reported that consumers sometimes spoke of regional foods with pleasure and anticipation, conveying the perception of these products as unusual and special, comprising taste and texture sensations which give rise to an enhanced gastronomic experience. This perception has echoes in the anecdotal evidence, reported at the beginning of this Chapter, in support of the geophysical dimension of typicity in foods. That is, frequent claims are made to suggest that the products of certain defined geographic areas are imbued with special organoleptic characteristics, giving them refined and superior flavours. Furthermore, other work points out that as speciality regional foods are derived from small-scale, artisanal production methods, they can be imbued with an exclusive, rarity value (e.g. Kupiec and Revell, 1998). As such, speciality regional foods may be considered 'gourmet' because of their lack of ubiquity. Finally, some authors also point to the fact that distinctive foods from certain territories, when made available in other geographic areas, may take on qualities of exoticism, lending them a specialist cachet (Jordana, 2000). Thus, what may appear to be commonplace and humdrum in one area may become a remarkable luxury in another.

It is intriguing to note that speciality regional foods can be associated with both 'rustic' and 'gourmet' qualities: dimensions which appear to be the opposite of each other. Drawing from the literature presented in this Chapter however, a number of explanations can be put forward to explain the contradiction. First, there is the anthropological notion of foods as symbols of status and identity: when foods become fashionable or associated with elite groups within society (as highlighted by the adoption of *haute cuisine* amongst the European aristocracy in the 18th and 19th centuries) the food products themselves

become imbued with status and prestige, irrespective of their potentially basic, simple origins. This according of status fluctuates over time, as evinced by the previously cited example of shellfish being despised in the 12th century (Montanari, 1994), but prized as a coastal delicacy in the 19th century (Mason, 1999). Currently in UK food culture, it would appear that speciality regional foods are accorded high status by certain consumers, because geophysical elements and hand-crafted, traditional production methods are perceived as 'markers' to enhanced organoleptic qualities in finished products. As Moran (1993) points out however, this use of territory is only one means of 'marking out' high-status foods (it happens to be a very French way), with the implication that in cultures or eras where other markers of status are used, speciality regional foods may lose their gourmet appeal.

A final set of arguments to explain the apparent contradiction of rustic and gourmet qualities derives from the sociological accounts of the impact of industrialisation on food habits. As Montanari (1994) asserts, once populations became 'delocalised' from small-scale agriculture and food production by moving from rural to urban areas, foods derived from such small-scale production became imbued with new values: the laborious, painstaking processes and the peasant lifestyles embodied within the products became perceived positively by de-racinated urban dwellers, in a mood of wistful nostalgia. In this way, he points out, the rustic qualities of speciality regional foods become highly prized themselves.

2.4.6 Speciality Regional Foods as 'Natural'

A third distinct quality associated with speciality regional foods is that of naturalness: the notion of typical foods as being fresh, pure and unadulterated. Thus, despite the earlier assertion of Levi-Strauss that all foods represent the transition from 'nature' to 'culture', typical foods appear to be associated with a less drastic transformation, using methods which are environmentally and ecologically sustainable. From the study of Kuznesof *et al* (1997), consumers were found to perceive regional foods as non-artificial, with the

standpoint that where end products contained synthetic additives, this would detract from their status as 'regional' foods. In a similar vein, Jordana (2000) alludes to the popularity of speciality regional foods being derived from their quality as 'anti-Frankenstein foods', in an age where genetic modification and other scientific incursions in food production are objects of consumer concern. Thus, there appears to be a distinction between typical foods as the products of primarily human interventions, and industrialised foods, as the products of scientific and technological interventions, designed for an industrial marketplace.

2.4.7 Speciality Regional Foods as 'Traditional'

A fourth quality associated with speciality regional foods is that of 'tradition'. As Kuznesof *et al* highlight (1997), tradition and heritage are concepts which can be used to distinguish regional foods from all other types: it is the particular place-related production 'stories' which they offer which makes them distinctive as a set of products. Participants in this study associated tradition with both the methods of food production and processing developed within an area, as well as the habits, customs and lifestyles of the local people using the foods. Throughout, the input of human labour, skills and expertise was recognised. These perceptions echo the assertions of Bérard and Marchenay (1995) and Mason (1999), who depict regional foods as those arising from the inter-generational transfer of skills and savoir-faire in hand-crafted products.

A number of food sociologists have contemplated more deeply the apparent popularity of qualities of tradition and hand-craft in foods today. Fischler (1988) for example, asserts that food derived from agro-industrial processes is food without origin, history or identity. This makes consumers 'angst-ridden' over their food choice, an angst which may be alleviated through the purchase of foods conveying qualities of 'tradition'. Similarly, Warde (1997) and Amilien (1999) argue that traditional, hand-crafted foods offer a 'moral and aesthetic anchor' in the modern world, a source of security in the face of 'McDonaldization' (after Ritzer, 1996). Rochefort, cited in Trognon (1998), goes

further to argue that the demand for traditional foods springs from the desire of modern, urbanised consumers to return to their roots: a notion which echoes other authors' observations of the concept of rusticity. However, Kupiec and Revell (1998) allude to a slightly different notion of what traditional, hand-crafted products offer the consumer: that of the ability to have knowledge of the production process and thereby enter into a more direct and intimate relationship with the producer. A startling example reported by these authors serves to highlight this point: at the time of the listeria scare surrounding Lanark Blue cheese in the early 1990s, respondents to the authors' survey reported *increasing* their consumption of this cheese, or trying it for the first time. It may be interpreted that the feature of this cheese as artisanally produced led to feelings of confidence and trust amongst consumers, notwithstanding the uncertainties surrounding the product's safety.

2.4.8 Speciality Regional Foods as Symbols of Local Pride

The fifth and final quality of speciality regional foods proposed here is the ability of such foods to tap into, or represent, the pride and aspirations of local people. As the participants of the study of Kuznesof *et al* asserted, regional foods are the products used and consumed by local people. However, what many 'country of origin' and related studies find is that consumers tend to express a preference for products of their own country or region (e.g. Guerro *et al*, 1998; Wirthgen *et al*, 1998) which suggests that consumers may imbue such products with positive features which they associate with themselves. This tendency can be explained through the anthropological theory, noted already in this Chapter, that foods are expressions of identity, used by human beings to indicate belonging to a community, or to indicate difference from others. Thus, a speciality regional food may be valued and appreciated not necessarily because of its taste characteristics or precise method of production, but rather because it embodies the human skills, ingenuity, efforts and resources of the local area. Driver (1983) goes further than this, to argue that foods may be associated with local political activities, using the re-

emergence of nationalist politics in the 1980s in Scotland and Wales to explain the rise in interest in regional cuisines during this time.

2.5 Summary

This Chapter has addressed the question 'what is a speciality regional food?' by investigating in depth the nature of the link between food and territory, drawing from the scientific, social historical and marketing literatures. First, two key facets - geophysical and human - have been proposed as comprising the 'essence' of territorial distinctiveness in foods. Next, a series of macro-environmental forces have been presented (international trade; population migration; organisation of social hierarchies; industrialisation and agrifood policy) and their impacts on geophysical and human facets of typicity discussed. With these, it was demonstrated that trade and migration continually change the geophysical and human facets of typicity, highlighting the fallacy of perceiving territorially distinctive foods as 'fixed' in time and space. The organisation of social hierarchies meanwhile, highlighted how foods can be accorded different levels of status and prestige over time, which can serve either to reinforce or erode territorial distinctiveness in foods. The force of industrialisation was seen to have had a complex and ambiguous impact on territorially distinctive foods in the UK, standardising food production and homogenising food habits on the one hand, but creating new specialities and giving rise to branded, identifiable products on the other. The impact of agrifood policies in the UK over the last century, however, was found to have had a more straightforwardly detrimental influence on the existence of speciality regional foods in this country.

Having considered the essential elements of a territorially distinctive food, and the environmental impacts moderating them, the Chapter then presented the perspective of speciality regional foods as marketable exchange items which offer particular qualities and features to consumers. From this perspective, it was determined that territorial distinctiveness can be viewed as a fluid, manipulable attribute, subject to the

interpretations of both producers and consumers. In terms of the end qualities that consumers associate with speciality regional foods, the findings of existing consumer studies were synthesised to propose a five-fold list (rustic; gourmet; natural; traditional and 'local pride'), the permutations of which were then discussed with reference to the scientific and social historical evidence presented earlier in the Chapter.

In terms of answering the question 'what is a speciality regional food?' therefore, this Chapter has highlighted that territorially distinctive foods may be analysed from a variety of perspectives and comprise complex meanings and associations. As such, the discussion has paved the way for an in-depth, empirical investigation of speciality regional food products currently on the market. Before this is conducted however, an understanding is needed of the *producers* of these products: whatever complex meanings and associations are present in speciality regional foods must be at least partly due to the mentalities, objectives and decisions of the individuals who bring them to the market. These issues and considerations are the subject of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 Speciality Regional Foods: The Producers

3.1 Introduction

Having explored in depth the essential composition, social history and marketing qualities of speciality regional foods, the focus of this investigation now turns to the *producers* of these products. As emphasised in previous Chapters, any study of the marketing of items such as territorially distinctive foods is incomplete without a consideration of the individuals and firms who create them and bring them to the marketplace. Whatever impacts the various social, economic and political forces have had on territorially distinctive foods over time, the nature and qualities of such foods currently on the market are, at least in part, a reflection of the mentalities of their producers. Thus, the purpose of this Chapter is to explore who speciality regional food producers are and how they behave. What are the characteristics of these individuals and enterprises? What are their feelings and dispositions towards what they do? How do they make decisions about their products, both in terms of methods of production and how they are offered onto the market? To address these questions, literature from a wide variety of fields is drawn from including small business, marketing, entrepreneurship and sociology. The Chapter begins with a brief review of existing empirical studies of speciality regional food producers in the UK, summarising the apparent key profiles and characteristics of such producers. Next, an exploration is conducted into how individuals and enterprises of this sort might behave, beginning with the theories proposed in the marketing and small business literatures, and continuing with those arising from studies of entrepreneurship. Finally, the exploration draws from sociological work, particularly studies of craftspeople or artisans, to shed further light on speciality food producer behaviour. The Chapter concludes with a summary of the key points to take forward for primary research.

3.2 Profile and Characteristics of Speciality Regional Food Producers

First, who are speciality regional food producers and what can be said about their profile and characteristics? Already, the review of the social history of regional foods in Chapter 2 gives an indication of the potential variety of producer types which may currently exist. On the one hand, speciality regional food producers may be small-scale, 'peasant' agriculturists, drawing from on-farm resources and/or generations of tradition to make hand-crafted products, in spite of the contrary forces of industrialisation and 20th century agricultural policy. On the other hand, they may be the descendants of the Victorian entrepreneurs who gave distinct brand identities to certain foods for the first time, and turned them into 'regional specialities'. Or, they may be simply businessmen and women producing and marketing goods to make a livelihood just like their contemporaries in any other processing or manufacturing sector. The potential for different types of behaviours and product and marketing decisions would appear to be vast.

The first task therefore, is to try to identify any common features or characteristics of speciality regional food producers. An extensive literature search revealed three existing empirical studies focused specifically on such producers: two surveys of the 'speciality' food sector commissioned by Food From Britain (MORI, 1995, cited in Food From Britain, 1996; and DTZ Pieda Consulting, 1999) and a study of the development needs of the speciality food and drink sector in the north west of England (Cope, 1997). Although the sampling frames of these studies differ from one another, some conclusions about basic producer characteristics can be drawn:

(i) *Size*. Speciality food producers tend to be small, or micro businesses (DTZ found that nearly 70% of their sample had 10 employees or less; Cope found that 84% employed 4 people on average);

(ii) *Turnover*: These producers tend to have a limited turnover (both the MORI and DTZ surveys found average firm turnover to be less that £250,000);

(iii) *Location*:: 70% of producers are located in rural areas (DTZ);

(iv) *Production Methods*: although not formally investigated within the surveys, there was some evidence to suggest that the use of hand-crafted production methods, though not a defining feature of speciality food firms, are nevertheless important to many such producers.

Thus, the results of these studies do give some basic information into the profile of speciality regional food producers. However, as they take primarily a structured, quantitative approach, little insight is given into what these identified characteristics mean for the mentality and behaviour of such producers. It is not indicated, for example, what impact limited human and financial resources might have on the way a speciality food producer deals with production and marketing activities, or what the engagement in hand-crafted processes might mean for the way he or she regards the purpose of the enterprise. It is these issues which are crucial to this investigation. Fortunately, work in the small business, entrepreneurship and sociological literatures does give further insights into these questions, although the studies are not focused specifically on the speciality food sector. Before exploring this work however, the notion of what is meant by 'mentality' and 'behaviour' in business needs to be introduced and explained more fully. This is discussed most comprehensively in the marketing literature and is the subject of the following section.

3.3 Market Orientation: Theory and Construct

Whatever their particular circumstances or profile, from an economics or marketing perspective it may be asserted that speciality food producers in the UK today are private enterprises operating in a free market. As such, their existence is underpinned by a basic

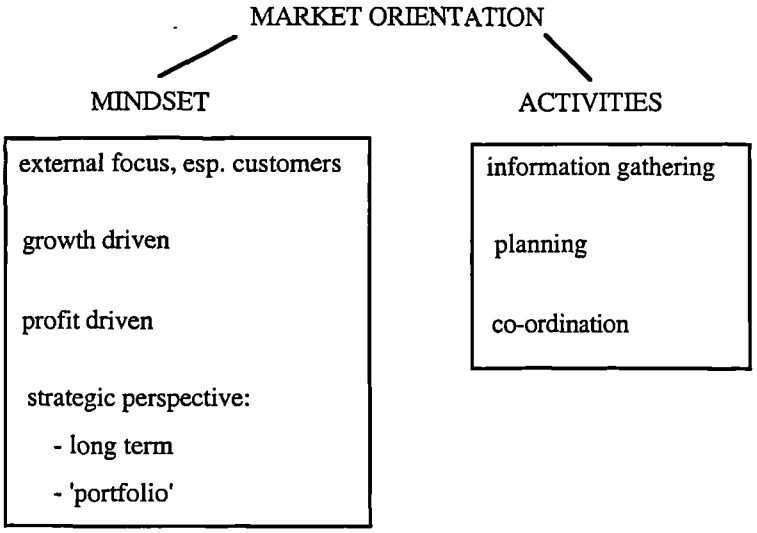
economic truth: no matter what the social historical significance of their products or the unique raw materials comprising them, if sufficient income is not generated to cover the costs of production, these producers will cease to exist. In the marketing and management literatures, it is argued that producers can address this 'truth' with certain behaviours - ways of thinking and acting - which will increase the likelihood of the survival and growth of their enterprises in the long term. Specifically, the behaviour that is advocated for long term commercial success is that of 'market orientation'.

Market orientation has been defined variously as a "shared set of beliefs and values that put the customer in the center of the firm's thinking" (Deshpande and Webster, 1989), a "state to which a business tends towards its customers" (Dalgic, 1998) and an "organisational culture focused on the market" (Harris and Ogbonna, 1999). What these definitions have in common is the notion of market orientation as a state of mind or guiding philosophy inherently possessed by a producer or manager, which is also permeated throughout an enterprise and shared by the employees. The substance of this philosophy involves appreciation, by producers, of the critical role played by consumers in business survival and growth. Without consumers, a business will soon fail. Therefore, in a market oriented firm, all individuals are said to share the common purpose of attracting and retaining customers.

Although such definitions convey the broad meaning of market orientation, the implications in terms of actual implementable behaviour are less clear. What does a producer actually have to do in order to become market oriented? How can market oriented behaviour be recognised? Some authors have investigated this by developing theoretical constructs of market orientation, which propose particular behaviours and activities conducive to this orientation. The pioneering work of Narver and Slater (1990), Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993) has been most influential, with their constructs being extended and modified by a plethora of subsequent studies (e.g. Deng and Dart, 1994;

Greenley, 1995; Gray *et al*, 1998; Pelham, 1999). Synthesising the key elements of the constructs developed in these studies, it appears that market oriented behaviour involves the following combination of mindsets (ways of thinking) and activities (ways of doing) (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Components of Market Oriented Behaviour



Thus on the one hand, market oriented behaviour appears to involve a mental predisposition towards certain phenomena and goals. First, there is the focus of the producer on factors external to the firm: most emphatically the customer, however the constructs mentioned previously also propose that a focus on competitor activities and macro-environmental trends are also integral to market oriented behaviour. Next, it is proposed that market orientation involves the prioritisation of growth and profit objectives by the producer: crucially, all studies appear to assert that market oriented behaviour involves the choice of the producer to focus on growth and profits as primary objectives. Finally in terms of the 'mindset' of market orientation, some studies (e.g. Narver and Slater, 1990) include the predisposition of the producer towards what may be called a 'strategic' perspective: that is, a readiness to

contemplate the long-term consequences of actions and/or the inclination to perceive the enterprise as a portfolio of activities and resources, open to judicious 'mixing'.

On the other hand, market oriented behaviour also appears to involve the execution of certain activities. Most readily noted by previous studies (in particular those of Kohli and Jaworski), are information gathering and processing activities within the firm. As may be expected, studies appear to emphasise market and customer information gathering above all, though continuous research of the general external environment is also considered integral to a market orientation. A second set of activities involves planning: that is, the logical, systematic setting out of courses of action in response to gathered information, so that objectives may be achieved. Finally in terms of activities, and highlighted in particular by the studies of Kohli and Jaworski (1990; 1993) and Harris and Ogbonna (1999), the co-ordination of individuals and functions within the enterprise are also considered instrumental to a market oriented firm.

3.3.1 Empirical Support for Constructs of Market Orientation

Overall therefore, market orientation is proposed to be a multi-dimensional construct of producer behaviour which combines a set of mental predispositions or modes of thinking with the execution of certain activities. In fact, there is some empirical support for the validity of this construct in the work of Narver and Slater (1990) who, in testing the robustness of their own specific construct, verified that the sets of mentalities and activities akin to those presented in Figure 3.1 are mutually complementary, and together seem to describe a coherent orientation (although authors such as Gray *et al* (1998) do point out that the precise emphasis of the separate components of the behaviour may vary from sector to sector, or from country to country). In addition, studies have also measured the impact of this behaviour on the financial performance of enterprises, demonstrating most frequently that market orientation does have a positive impact, although, for example, the competitive

environment (Greenley, 1995) or the type of product (Narver and Slater, 1990) may have moderating effects. Overall however, for any speciality food producer operating as a private enterprise in an industrialised and competitive free market, there does appear to be support for the notion that market orientation is a sensible behaviour to adopt to ensure survival and growth.

3.3.2 Critiques of Market Orientation

Despite the intuitive appeal of the logic of market orientation and the empirical evidence to show its impact on enterprise performance, a number of concerns and criticisms have been raised regarding the manner in which the concept is advocated by its proponents, as well as towards weaknesses in the construct itself. These are all very relevant to its potential as a useful mode of behaviour for speciality food producers. First, it is argued that the manner in which proponents advocate marketing orientation, typically as the culmination of a linear progression of orientations going from production through to sales, gives the impression that it is the most enlightened form of enterprise orientation, superior to all others (Pearson, 1993). This gives the impression that market orientation is a universally applicable 'magic formula' which can bestow benefits regardless of enterprise size, sector, or environment. This normative stance overlooks the fact that there are costs associated with conducting market research or instigating planning activities and these may, in certain circumstances, outweigh the benefits of executing them. Recalling the survey evidence of Cope (1997) and DTZ (1999), the fact that speciality regional food producers have limited resources means this problem of costs may be highly relevant. Furthermore, Houston (1986) argues that the success of any behavioural orientation is dependent upon competitive and market circumstances, such that situations where a firm has no other competitors, or customers actively seek out the firm's products, a production or sales orientation may prove more profitable because these involve reduced costs. This argument has some empirical support in the work of Narver and Slater (1990) and Greenley (1995), who both find that under certain

circumstances, higher levels of market orientation are associated with reduced performance. Again, speciality food producers may find themselves in these types of market conditions.

A second set of criticisms comes from management researchers who take issue with the prioritisation in market orientation of customer needs above all other others. Kimery and Rinehart (1998) and Greenley and Foxall (1997) for example argue that to be successful a firm must consider the needs of a much wider set of stakeholders, both internal and external to the firm, than customers alone. Over-emphasis on just one stakeholder group, they argue, is potentially dangerous. Indeed Greenley and Foxall's empirical study shows that achievement of a balance between different stakeholder interests is more effective than trying to prioritise one or two interests over the others. For speciality food producers engaged in up-holding a socially significant artisan practice, or who are offering employment in remote rural areas, these criticisms may well have resonance.

Finally, other authors argue that the construct of market orientation itself is conceptually weak and over-simplified (Harris and Ogbonna, 1999). Previously developed theories of market orientation give no consideration of the subtle complexities of individual psychology or organisational culture, thereby ignoring the difficulties associated with producers' adoption of a mindset, as well as those associated with enterprise-wide 'permeation' of a philosophy. As a result, it is unclear what concepts such as 'customer focus' or 'strategic perspective' involve exactly in terms of individual abilities, skills or resources, and it is similarly obscure how mindsets or ideas may be transmitted between employees. Harris and Ogbonna also criticise the constructs of market orientation developed for empirical testing, such as those of Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990; 1993), for being too reductionist, boiling down complex behaviours to certain parameters which can be measured through structured research instruments and then quantitatively analysed. Behaviour is effectively 'de-humanised', overlooking the role and value of producer

mentalities and activities which do not contribute directly to economic or financial goals. As such, it is argued that these constructs can only give a partial picture of actual producer behaviour (also discussed by Hackley, 1998).

Thus, the principles of market oriented behaviour have been introduced and explained, with arguments and some empirical support to suggest that this behaviour is useful and appropriate for enterprises, such as UK speciality food producers, who operate in competitive, industrialised free market economies. However, some caveats and weaknesses have been noted in the conceptualisation and construct of market orientation, which may have strong relevance to speciality food producers given their profile and characteristics. These raise questions as to exactly what sort of behaviours such producers should and do adopt. Is it possible for speciality food producers to be market oriented? If so, in what form? If these producers are not market oriented, then what behaviours do they display and what does this mean for their fundamental need to survive or grow in competitive markets? To address these questions, the next sections go on to review the work conducted in the literatures of small business, entrepreneurship and the sociology of craft production: this will allow more in-depth exploration of the behaviours which may be found in firms akin to speciality food producers, with indications for what this means in terms of their propensity for market orientation.

3.4 The Behaviour of Small Firms

From the survey evidence of Cope (1997) and DTZ (1999), it appears that a very common characteristic of speciality food producers is that they are small or micro-sized, thus a starting point in understanding their behaviour is to explore more generally the behaviour of small and micro businesses. In the literature, firm size is usually defined according to employee numbers, with 'small' indicating enterprises of 100 employees or less, and 'micro' indicating employees of 10 or less (Storey, 1994). A first point to note therefore is that small firms are

heterogeneous in nature, from quite formalised, hierarchical enterprises, to family firms, partnerships and individual entrepreneurs. Speciality regional food producers may fall into any one of these categories of small firm. In discussing their behaviour however, researchers are keen to emphasise that, as a group, small firms possess distinctive characteristics which set them apart from their larger counterparts, making them quite unlike miniature replicas of large firms (Storey, 1994; Carson, 1990). As such, any 'received wisdom' regarding management behaviour and orientation developed from large firm research needs to be treated with caution. In particular, three distinctive small firm characteristics, all of relevance to speciality food producers, are put forward as posing particular problems for classic behavioural 'wisdom': the limited resources of small firms; the nature of their markets and customer relations; and the distinctive influence of the small firm owner/manager.

3.4.1 Limited Resources

Many authors point out that one of the key distinctive characteristics of small firms (in particular, as has been seen, in speciality regional food producers) is that they have limited resources, which are expressed in terms of a lack of time and personnel as well as financial resources. Empirical studies show that a fundamental concern of small firms relates to financial matters such as cash flow and the location of sources of finance (Binks and Ennew, 1997). Small firms tend to have tight operating margins which leaves them highly vulnerable to late payments and bad credit. In terms of the lack of human resources, small firms by definition have fewer individuals available to perform all the necessary tasks within a business (Carson, 1995). This implies a lack of specialised labour and the likelihood that single people in small firms will be adopting multiple work roles. Finally, the lack of personnel has the consequence of placing severe time pressures on the small number of workers available. These problems appear to become particularly acute in family firms, where the delicate nature of inter-personal relations seems to aggravate the situation (Baines

and Wheelock, 1997). Small firm employees are therefore stretched in their abilities to accomplish tasks effectively.

On the face of it, the lack of resources characteristic of small firms raises strong doubts about their ability to behave in a market oriented manner. First, the practical implications of a lack of resources is that the activities associated with market orientation (e.g. research and planning) are unlikely to be conducted, either because the enterprise is too cash poor to resource them, or too busy producing products to devote time to them, or specialist personnel are not available to 'champion' such activities and execute them fully. Empirical work strongly supports these notions, revealing that small firms tend to adopt ad-hoc approaches to decision-making and eschew market research or planning activities (Carson and Cromie, 1989; Hogarth-Scott *et al*, 1996; Horng and Cheng-Hsui Chen, 1998). Second, the preoccupation with day to day worries, combined with a 'fire-fighting' approach to peaks and troughs of demand, implies that small firms find it difficult to adopt long term perspectives or focus on the external environment. Therefore, limited resources appear to detract from market oriented behaviour.

On the other hand, some authors argue that a small critical mass of resources can have quite contrasting implications for market orientation. In particular, it is argued that the lack of heavy capital investments, specialised functions or separate departments allows small firms to be highly flexible, adaptable and innovative (Carson, 1995). Whereas large firms, with all their organisational and resource 'baggage', may take a long time to switch direction or respond to changing customer needs, small firms are able to make rapid responses to shifting trends or market developments. This argument has some empirical support in the work of North and Smallbone (1996), who found in their study of small firms in northern England that rural-based firms were adaptive and innovative in their management decisions, despite suffering disadvantages and limitations on account of their remote locations (in fact, the

authors suggest that innovativeness is the *result* of such limitations). This kind of flexibility may be thought of as an essential element within market-oriented behaviour. Lack of resources therefore leads to alternative implications for the propensity for market oriented behaviour in small firms.

3.4.2 Nature of Markets and Customer Relations

The second distinctive feature of small firms concerns the basis on which they compete in the marketplace as well as the nature of their customer relations. This is an intriguing characteristic to contemplate for speciality food producers, given the fact that their products - with their geophysical and human facets - lend themselves to differentiation and that the long-standing renown of some product names implies an established customer base. Many authors indeed argue that the most effective competitive strategy for small firms is that of a niche or focus strategy, whereby a particular set of customer needs are targeted, most usually with high value products featuring additional quality and service attributes (Carson, 1995; Greening *et al*, 1996). In view of their small size, small firms are thought not to be able to compete effectively on price, therefore the logic is that they should avoid direct competition with larger firms and effectively develop mini 'monopolies' of their own with specific customer groups. Empirical work suggests that many small firms do in fact operate in niche markets, engaging in close and direct relations with their customers and experiencing a lot of repeat custom (e.g. Bryson *et al*, 1997; SBRC, 1992). For studies where comparison is available, it appears that those firms who operate in niche markets perform better than those who don't.

What implications does this have for market oriented behaviour in the small firm? One initial conclusion is that if small firms perceive themselves to be operating in niche markets then it suggests that they are aware of the nature of their customers and competitors, and take decisions on the basis of that 'feel' for the external environment. This notion has some

empirical support in the work of Hogarth-Scott *et al* (1996) who found that despite limited resources which curtailed research and planning activities, many of the small firm managers they studied had the ability or 'knack' for spotting opportunities and relating well to customers. Furthermore, in a series of in-depth interviews with speciality food producers in the north west of England, Cope (1997) found that participants demonstrated versatility and adaptability, developing new products and opportunities through informal customer feedback and via an instinctive 'feel' for what would work. In both cases, such behaviour appears to echo that of the external focus of market oriented behaviour.

However there is a contrasting interpretation of the nature of small firm markets and customer relations which has quite different implications for producer focus and orientation. Niche markets may be thought of as involving committed, loyal buyers who are willing to seek out the small firm and pay a higher price for the product. Following the arguments of Houston (1989), this is a type of producer-consumer relationship where extensive activities such as market research would be counter-productive, as the costs would outweigh the benefits. In fact, in this type of market, Houston proposes that production-oriented behaviour is appropriate, whereby the producer's mindset and activities are focused on making efficient the processes internal to the firm, rather than being predisposed towards the external environment. Although it may be counter-argued that with customer needs always changing in free-market economies it is important to maintain some external focus and activities, the arguments of Houston do raise questions about the appropriateness of market oriented behaviour in small firms. Overall, the nature of small firms' markets and customer relations raise some intriguing questions about speciality food producers' behaviour and their propensity to be market oriented.

3.4.3 Influence of the Owner/Manager

A third distinguishing characteristic of small enterprises such as speciality food producers is the influence of the owner manager. Given the few individuals employed in small firms, many studies point out that overall, owner managers in small firms have more autonomy and authority in their management decisions and, as such, their personalities and management styles predominate to a greater extent than would be the case in larger firms (Carson, 1990). One key aspect of this influence relevant to the question of market oriented behaviour is the small firm manager's mentality towards growth. Although a focus on growth is seen as an essential underpinning characteristic of market orientation, empirical studies have found repeatedly that the majority of small producers do not prioritise growth objectives (e.g. Brooksbank *et al*, 1992). Whilst this tendency appears to vary according to small firm size and type, with fewer microfirms (SBRC, 1992) and family firms (Binks and Ennew, 1997) prioritising growth objectives, overall it has been estimated that as few as 10% of small producers actively wish to grow (Binks and Ennew, 1997). It seems that in many small firms, once operations have reached a certain level, managers are content to supply the needs of the existing market with existing products, and 'progress' no further (Carson and Cromie, 1989).

Clearly, the influence of the small firm owner/manager and his or her lack of growth objectives have implications for the propensity for market oriented behaviour. Following the constructs of market orientation presented earlier, growth objectives supply the underpinning rationale for diverting resources to market oriented activities such as research and planning. In addition, without growth objectives, the impetus to focus on the external environment, to study changes in customer needs and competitor activities as well as to take a long term perspective, is reduced. In this sense, the lack of growth objectives of many small firm managers appears to undermine their propensity for behaving in a market oriented fashion. Alternatively, it may be argued that firms who wish 'merely' to survive may also adopt

market oriented behaviour. Although growth objectives may provide impetus for the adoption of market oriented mindsets and activities, managers of any type of private enterprise may find such behaviour appropriate in an economic climate where customer needs and the external environment are changing constantly. Thus it is possible to envisage speciality food producers who, although not intent on increasing significantly the size or scope of their enterprises, nevertheless aim to achieve financial targets and display behaviour appropriate to this. The growth objectives of small firm managers do appear to raise questions about market oriented behaviour therefore.

The above sections have considered how three key characteristics of small firms may impact on their propensity for market oriented behaviour. Thus far, it may be concluded that the impact may be mixed. In considering these characteristics however, it is noteworthy that in the main they relate to conditions and circumstances which small producers may find themselves in: there is very little direct insight as to how such producers think and behave as *individuals*. Such insights are important to a consideration of the overall behaviour and orientation of speciality food producers. For example, a speciality food producer may not undertake planning or research activities through lack of resources, however he or she may, as an individual, just have an intuitive feel for customer relations or a predisposition towards taking stock of the external environment. One body of literature which considers the small producer as an individual with innate traits and characteristics is entrepreneurship. This literature is considered in the next section.

3.5 The Small Producer as Entrepreneur

Many studies have been undertaken in the area of entrepreneurship, although clear definitions and characterisations in this field appear to be elusive (Bridge *et al*, 1998). The concept itself has its roots in macroeconomic theory, in particular the work of Schumpeter (1934), who identified entrepreneurs as the source of 'creative destruction' in economies, using new

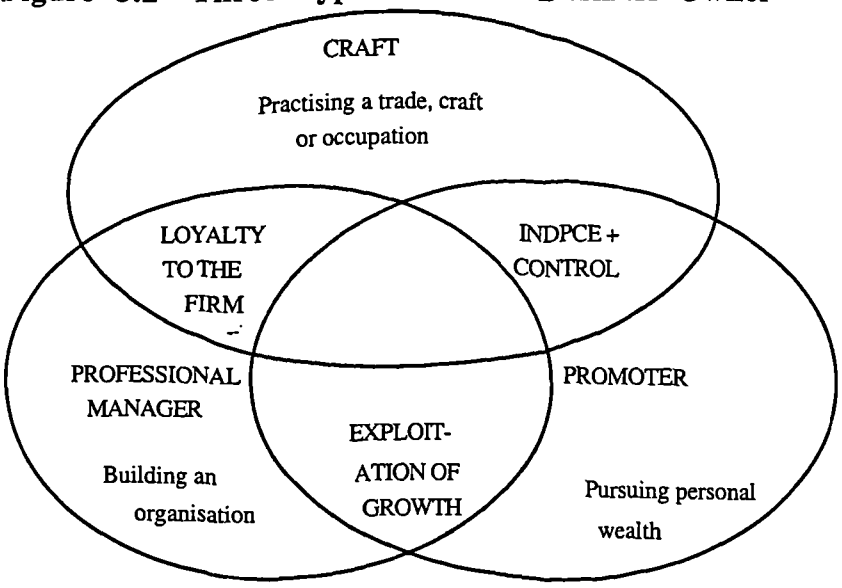
and innovative technologies and methods in their activities which render existing patterns of exchange transaction obsolete, thus altering the nature of production and consumption in an industrial sector. Thus, entrepreneurs are conceived of as individuals starting up and running small businesses, who act as 'agents for change'. Those speciality food producers who have recently set up their enterprises, such as the revivalist cheese-makers of the 1970s and 80s, may therefore have been acting entrepreneurially, their craft-based production methods being 'innovative' in a sector dominated by mechanised manufacture. Similarly, the small-scale agriculturists who have diversified into speciality food production whilst their contemporaries have continued to produce basic, undifferentiated commodities may also be conceived of as 'entrepreneurs'.

According to the literature however, not everyone who starts up or runs a small firm is automatically an entrepreneur. Rather, some authors (e.g. McClelland, 1961) argue entrepreneurship is associated with certain personality traits and behaviours. Although the precise findings of individual studies vary, it seems to be generally agreed that these traits include creativity, independence-seeking, risk-taking, and achievement orientation (see Stanworth *et al*, 1989; Carson, 1995; Bridge *et al*, 1998). The entrepreneur is characterised as an individual who possesses imaginative and creative abilities, is open to and willing to act upon opportunities, dislikes authority and has inner convictions and the 'will to succeed'.

Since this early work of the trait theorists however, other authors have taken a social psychological approach to the study of entrepreneurship, arguing that entrepreneurs are shaped through early socialisation and later work experiences, which provide individuals with the beliefs and motives which drive them to behave in particular ways (e.g. Stanworth and Curran, 1976; Smith and Miner, 1983). These studies of entrepreneurship tend to propose categorisations or typologies of small business managers according to the types of motivation or cues which drive their behaviour. One interesting aspect of these typologies is

that the appellation of 'Craftsman' or 'Artisan' is used commonly to denote small firm managers who do *not* possess the creativity, risk-taking or achievement-oriented characteristics of the 'classic' entrepreneur. Such individuals are considered to be poorly equipped to deal with a management role in a larger sized firm, and they do not seek growth objectives. A useful synthesis of these studies and their typologies is provided by Hornaday (1990). This author proposes three types of small business owner, distinguished according to the perceived goals and instrumental activities they pursue (Figure 3.2). 'Perceived goals' (depicted in upper case) represent the owner's perceived source of satisfaction in their working life. 'Instrumental activities' (depicted in lower case) are viewed as those activities which move the business owner nearer towards their perceived real purpose in life.

Figure 3.2 Three Types of Small Business Owner



Source: Hornaday, 1990.

Therefore, in this categorisation, Hornaday identifies first the '*Promoter*': this, in many ways, is the 'classic' entrepreneur type driven by the need for independence and the exploitation of growth, whose primary activities are geared towards the pursuit of personal wealth accumulation. Second is the '*Professional Manager*', who shares the Promoter's

growth-driven needs but rather than seeking independence, is motivated by loyalty to his or her own career within the firm. The Professional Manager's primary activities are geared towards building an organisation, as befits an individual whose perceived self-purpose and source of satisfaction is in managing people. Third, the '*Craft*' owner is identified as an individual who shares the Promoter's desire for independence, but who feels a sense of loyalty to his or her own career in the existing trade. A Craft owner's instrumental activities involve the practice of his or her trade, as befits an individual whose primary enjoyment comes from being involved in producing products. This typology is useful in that it underlines the fact that not all small producers share the same traits, nor do they pursue identical goals. Thus, amongst speciality food producers it may be possible to identify individuals who are classically entrepreneurial: that is, notwithstanding the social historical significance of their products, or the attachment to particular methods of production, they are predisposed to new opportunities, ready to exploit new markets, eager to achieve commercial success. Equally, it may be possible to identify speciality food producers who are motivated primarily by a love of the product or traditional production process, and for whom the dimension of the enterprise as 'commercial' is a tedious necessity. The typology also highlights the fact that there are overlaps between the different sorts of small firm manager behaviour: traits and characteristics are not mutually exclusive therefore, and changes in circumstances may cause a manager to shift between different behaviours over time.

Overall then, what are the implications of entrepreneurship research for investigating behaviour in small firms? First, there are implications at the level of comparing 'classic' characteristics of market oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies. On the one hand, it may be argued that many of the characteristics identified in entrepreneurs are very similar to those considered integral to market oriented behaviour. First, there are the growth orientation and profit accumulation characteristics, thus both behaviours appear to be underpinned by commercial motivations. In addition, the propensities for risk-taking and opportunity

exploitation found in classic entrepreneurs may also be considered apposite to the mindset of market orientation. On the other hand however, 'classic' entrepreneurs appear to be characterised by single-mindedness and pursuit of their own beliefs, with decisions made impulsively and on the basis of gut feeling. Such characteristics appear to be somewhat contrary to the external focus of a market oriented mindset, and they also imply that entrepreneurs do not tend to act in a planned, research-led fashion. At this level therefore, research into entrepreneurship gives mixed implications for the propensity for market oriented behaviour amongst small producers.

On another level, the entrepreneurship studies described above give insights into potentially fruitful theoretical stances on which to base investigations of small producer behaviour. They demonstrate the complexities of individual mentalities and highlight the importance of considering the wider social context in which the small firm manager is situated. In particular, the work of Hornaday emphasises how diverse behavioural traits and characteristics can overlap with one another, thus it may be possible to identify small producers who possess aspects of both entrepreneurial and market-oriented mindsets, and other producers who possess neither. Hornaday's work also highlights how behaviour may change over time in response to circumstances and their impact on managers' values and motivations. Therefore, when investigating the behaviour of speciality food producers it appears that there is a range of characteristics and propensities to look out for which may be 'classically' entrepreneurial or 'classically' market-oriented (both of which may be essential to the survival of such producers in free-market economies), but a fruitful approach to explaining their existence may be to relate them to the individual producers' underpinning goals and motivations, as well as to the wider social context of the small enterprise.

A final, intriguing insight from studies of entrepreneurship is the fact that authors frequently apply the labels of 'artisan' or 'craftsman' to categorise small firm managers lacking in

entrepreneurial spark or external focus. The belief appears to be that artisan and craft producers have distinct motivations and characteristics which set them apart from other types of small firm: an important suggestion for this study, given the evidence that craft-based methods are important to many speciality food producers. However, it should be noted that these labels are applied as convenient 'catch-alls' to denote types of behaviour rather than being based on studies specifically of craft or artisan enterprises. To complete this Chapter's consideration of behaviour in small firms akin to speciality food producers therefore, the following sections now review the literature relating more specifically to these enterprises.

3.6 The Behaviour of Craft or Artisan Producers

In reviewing literature on craft and artisan producers, it is noteworthy that relatively few studies exist which have considered craft firms in modern industrialised economies (Terrio, 1996 and Fillis, 1999 are notable exceptions). A substantial literature can be found relating to craft firms in C18th and C19th Europe, the so-called time of 'crisis' for the craft sector in the face of the forces of industrialisation, when the Arts and Crafts Movement came to prominence (e.g. Anscombe and Gere, 1978; Cookson, 1997; Grayson and White, 1996; Hilton, 1998). Equally, many studies exist which investigate the present day craft or artisan producer in developing countries, contemplating their changing status as global, free-market systems impact on their livelihoods (e.g. Lackey, 1988; Littlefield, 1979; O'Conner, 1996; Nash, 1993; Rasmussen, 1995). The following sections draw from both sets of literature to make inferences about the status of craft-based production in the UK today, and to determine the implications of this for the behaviour and orientation of the producers themselves.

3.6.1 The Craft Producer

Although no official definition of craft or artisan producers exists in the UK, a generally accepted view of the craftsperson is as 'a self employed worker who makes traditional hand-made and artistic objects' (ENSR, 1996). Thus in today's terms, craft enterprises are

considered to be a certain type of small enterprise distinguished by the relatively high level of manual input into their production processes, often with recourse to historic or traditional methods. Also incorporated is the notion of craft products having an aesthetic or artistic dimension. Within this broad definition however, a number of different types of craftsperson can be seen existing in society today. For example, there is the workshop-based, highly trained, technically skilled 'master' craftsperson producing very specialised items such as musical instruments, saddlery, or - in the case of foods - *grand cru* chocolates (Terrio, 1996). The specialist baker or confectioner may also fit into this conceptualisation. Alternatively, there is the self-taught, lifestyle-oriented craftsperson making simple, functional, rustic items out of natural materials. Some cheese-makers may belong to this category. There are also 'ethnic' craftspersons (Lucie-Smith, 1981) in both developed and developing countries who produce primarily decorative items according to traditional or pseudo-traditional designs, and who may be thought to have much in common with artists.

The concept of craft production itself is similarly subject to multiple meanings: craft production may denote technical, manual skill within a defined genre, or an empathic sensibility towards natural materials, or an aesthetic ideal. To investigate further these multiple meanings of craft and craftspeople, and thus to understand the behaviour of craft producers themselves, it is useful to take an historical perspective on the status of craft production in European countries. Following the work of Lucie-Smith (1981), three main eras in the evolution of craft can be identified: ancient and medieval times; the Renaissance to the 18th century; and the Industrial Revolution to the 20th century. It should be noted that throughout these historical accounts, the 'crafts' which are the subject of the investigations are those non-food categories such as jewellery, ceramics and textiles, which came to such prominence in connection with the Arts and Crafts Movement. However, there are many insights to be gained which are of relevance to the understanding of speciality food

production over time, and within this, insights into how speciality food producers may think and behave.

3.6.2 Craft Production in Ancient and Medieval Times

First, Lucie-Smith identifies 'ancient' or 'traditional' times, from pre-history to the Middle Ages, when virtually all production activity in society was craft-based, and much of it undertaken in the household to be consumed by those who produced it. In terms of food, the ancient peasant-style, subsistence level production and processing of agricultural raw materials (as depicted in Chapter 2) appears to be an example of this vision of craft activity. Even in these ancient times however, Lucie-Smith notes that professional craftsmen began to organise themselves into associations or guilds. These guilds sought to maintain quality standards and regulate the entrance of new craftsmen into the trade, reaching the height of their power and influence in medieval times. By this time, many craft trades were organised in a very structured fashion with a strict hierarchy of labour. In large workshops, production was broken down and allocated between individual workers, who were largely engaged therefore in mechanical repetitive tasks. The master craftsman's role focused on the adding of final artistic touches to the products, thus there emerged a huge gap in income and social status between the master craftsman and jobbing journeymen. Although this vision of production does not accord readily with foods, it can be asserted, for example, that the production of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese was regulated and controlled from medieval times, and would also have involved a distinction between the 'master' cheese-makers and the lowly labourers. From a fairly early stage therefore, craft production has involved organised labour and division of production tasks: characteristics more commonly associated with industrial or factory production.

3.6.3 Craft Production from the Renaissance to the 18th Century

Whilst the craft guilds and workshops continued operating, in the Renaissance period a significant conceptual divide appeared between fine art, craft, and the values and status associated with producers of each (Lucie-Smith, 1981). Whereas fine artists were deemed intellectual, creative and bestowed of a divine gift of genius, craftsmen were considered lowly, engaged in activities which were the result of sheer hard graft. In addition, whereas fine artists were seen as the designers of taste, guiding society's aesthetic and cultural sensibilities, craftsmen were seen as the providers of functional objects, and as such were viewed as utilitarian businessmen, creating products for the purpose of exchange with others. At this stage therefore, craft producers were associated with economic objectives and actions related to 'market orientation'. In terms of food, it is possible to envision a parallel gap emerging between 'art' and 'craft': the appearance of fashionable, high status, *haute cuisine* foods (as described in Chapter 2) produced to be savoured and admired by wealthy elites as culinary art, existing alongside the bulk of food production designed for basic nutritional and economic necessities. As the 17th and 18th centuries progressed however, a proliferation of different types of craft producer is noted, from the fashionable, sophisticated urban workshops producing virtuoso items for wealthy socialites, to the rustic, rural producers making functional goods to fit in with local needs and lifestyles. At this stage therefore, craft production also seems to have had multiple meanings.

3.6.4 Craft Production from the Industrial Revolution to the 20th Century

The Industrial Revolution has been described as a time of crisis for craft production, and Chapter 2 has certainly emphasised the dramatic impact this period had on methods of food production and processing. However, what authors in this literature highlight in particular is the implications industrialisation had for the status and behaviour of individual craft producers, as the conditions of modern, free-market economies began to take shape. As Grayson and White argue (1996), the changes in craft production were not so much due to

machines replacing people (as many new factories continued to employ large numbers of workers), but rather because of the breakdown in the established hierarchies of labour organisation in craft production. The capital-less craftsmen, even master craftsmen, became itinerant, competing fiercely with one another and causing a general devaluation of their skills and status. At the same time, the rise to power of mercantile traders was witnessed, which further complicated the social status of craft producers and changed the nature of the economic exchange of manufactured goods. In contemporary accounts of artisans in developing countries (e.g. Nash, 1993), the emergence of professional traders is viewed with some concern, as they are perceived to have the potential to exploit craft producers through abuse of their powerful economic situation. There appears to be a notion therefore that the free-market systems which came into being with the Industrial Revolution are in some ways problematic for the status and expression of craft production, and that the behaviours adopted by individual craft producers to deal with these circumstances are in some way damaging, or antithetical to the essence of craft.

It was at the time of the Industrial Revolution that the Arts and Crafts Movement came to prominence. This was an aesthetic and political (primarily socialist) movement spearheaded by intellectuals and professionals which conveyed a particular notion of craft that many authors argue forms the basis of 20th century conceptualisations of 'true' craftsmanship (Anscombe and Gere, 1978). On the aesthetic side, the Movement preached the production of goods with simplicity and fitness for purpose, often drawing from naturalistic medieval designs for inspiration. Proponents perceived that an inelegant jumble of styles and designs of objects had arisen in the 18th and 19th centuries, the result, it was felt, of market forces: that is, individual producers were perceived as seeking indiscriminately to court the custom of emerging middle class consumers (who were perceived as lacking in aesthetic taste). In this sense, the concept of craft conveyed by the Arts and Craft Movement opposed the notion of the craftsperson being 'led' by the market, rather, the producer was seen to have a moral

responsibility to present the public with items of 'good taste' (Lucie-Smith, 1981). In the terms of this research therefore, Arts and Crafts Movement sympathisers exhorted a production-oriented approach to craftsmanship, guided by certain aesthetic beliefs and values. On the political side, the Movement sought to raise the status of craft producers by extolling the virtues of manual labour and technical skill (Anscombe and Gere, 1978). Reacting to the Renaissance judgements of the value of craft, and the focus of the Industrial Revolution on mechanisation of production, Arts and Crafts Movement sympathisers emphasised the social value and moral benefits of production processes which require high levels of human input. In this sense, the Arts and Crafts Movement highlighted the social dimensions of production activities over economic aspects. Interestingly however, the Movement does not appear to have campaigned with the same vigour on food products, where the de-humanising elements of science, technology and mechanics were being applied enthusiastically to production processes.

As the 20th century began however, the Arts and Crafts Movement was eclipsed in an aesthetic sense by the Deutsche Werkbund and Bauhaus workshops, who developed and modernised the ideals of simplicity and functionalism in design. In practical terms, many of the workshops set up under the Movement became bankrupt, although, as Lucie-Smith notes, small numbers of Arts and Craft Movement sympathisers continued to practice and do still exist today. However, as the 20th century has progressed, what many authors testify to is a gradual 'blurring of the edges' between art, craft and industry (e.g. O'Conner, 1996). It seems that in some senses the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution conceptualisations of art, craft and industry do still exist, but in other senses, the barriers between them have been broken down. For example, although Bauhaus creations possess the aesthetic ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, their manufacture involved largely industrial processes (Lucie-Smith, 1981). Furthermore, in the latter 20th century, some craft products, both historic and contemporary, have become prized as items of fine art (Becker, 1978). Equally, styles of

fine artists have become incorporated into craft products. In terms of food products, these observations echo those of Montanari (1994), described in Chapter 2, who notes how rustic peasant foods such as dark breads have become gourmet items amongst urban middle classes. The concept of craft now appears to be open to multiple meanings and interpretations.

This historical overview of the changing conceptualisation of craft and the evolving status of the craftsperson gives insights into the way in which craft and artisan producers are perceived today. It allows for deeper reflection upon the 'classic' characterisation of the craftsperson as a small independent producer making hand-made, traditional products. From the historical overview, it may be seen that this characterisation represents only one type of craft producer: one which has its roots in the 19th century notions of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In fact for many centuries, European craft production has involved hierarchically organised labour and division of production tasks between workers: notions quite removed from the classic characterisation. Furthermore, the historical overview highlights the changing perceptions of the aesthetic, artistic value of craft production over the course of different eras: in some periods, craftsmen have been considered businessmen producing utilitarian goods designed for a consuming public. In others, craftsmen have been perceived as messengers of a set of moral and aesthetic ideals, desirous of converting the values of the consuming public. With the notion that the boundaries between art, craft and industry have been blurred in the late C20th, it appears that elements of contrasting characterisations may co-exist within the same craft or artisan producer today.

Although the above discussion helps to explain the multiple meanings associated with craft and artisan producers today, what does it indicate for the behaviour of such producers? Can anything be inferred about the mentalities such producers have and the way they may orientate their enterprises? To synthesise the insights of the preceding sections on craft

production, two main types of craftsperson are identified - the 'artist' and the 'pragmatist', and, drawing from what this Chapter has discussed about market orientation, small businesses and entrepreneurs, distinct behaviours are identified in each.

3.6.5 The Craft Producer as 'Artist'

Following the 'classic' characterisation of the craftsperson as put forward by the Arts and Crafts Movement, the craft or artisan producer may be viewed as an individual who possesses strong moral and/or aesthetic values and who chooses to channel these through production activities. As Hirschman argues (1983), such an individual is very unlikely to be oriented towards meeting the needs of the consuming public with their products because it is the process itself of creating the product which gives the source of satisfaction, not the exchange of it with consumers. Indeed with this type of 'artistic' producer, the consumer is actually the artist him or herself - or a small, knowledgeable elite group - rather than a section of the paying public. Any commercial or economic possibilities of the craft activity are perceived to be detrimental to the artistic integrity of the producer (Fillis, 1999), and notions of mechanisation or standardisation to achieve efficiency are eschewed. Furthermore, on a more macro level, both Nash (1993) and Roy (1998) argue that the free-market system is damaging to the social and cultural role of the craftsperson, causing a cheapening of production processes and lowering of product quality. Both aesthetic and cultural ideals of craft activity are opposed, it seems, to free-market mechanisms. In terms of speciality food production, it is possible to think, for example, of some revivalist cheese-makers, or individuals committed to organic production, fitting this conceptualisation of a craftsperson.

What does this conceptualisation mean for producer behaviour? First, there appears to be little in terms of mindset or objectives which is complementary to market orientation. On the contrary, much of the behaviour implicit within this type of producer appears to be the complete antithesis of market orientation: concern for consumer needs is detrimental to artistic

integrity, the focus on the creative process suggests a lack of care about the external commercial environment, and conventional business notions of growth or profit are also antithetical to the inner-directed, aesthetic goals of the artist. This characterisation of craft producers appears to raise some serious questions for the applicability of the 'received wisdom' of market orientation. With respect to empirical evidence for the existence of this type of producer, the study of small business start-ups in rural areas undertaken by Townroe and Mallalieu (1993) found that individuals who started up craft-based enterprises were more likely than other enterprises to have done so for lifestyle reasons, pursuing non-profit and non-growth objectives. Although these findings do not incorporate the more aesthetic dimensions of the characterisation of craft producers given in this section, they do indicate that some craft-based producers may have objectives and behaviour patterns which are antithetical to market orientation. They would also appear to be antithetical to aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour, with the lack of interest in personal wealth accumulation, and lack of interest in making a commercial success of the enterprise. However, the entrepreneur's desire for independence may be echoed by this characterisation of the craft producer.

3.6.6 Craft Producer as 'Pragmatist'

An alternative conceptualisation of the craft producer synthesised from the literature is that of the craftsperson as a pragmatic producer of utilitarian goods, designed to be purchased and used by the consuming public. Becker for example (1978), argues that craft producers' needs are subordinate to those of their 'employers' (i.e. income providers), such that their purpose is to supply items which they will want to purchase and use. This characterisation of the craft producer has empirical support in the historical accounts of craft production in Europe: for example, Hilton's (1998) study of specialist tobacconists at the turn of the C20th highlights the adaptability of these artisans to changing market conditions and their ability to act in a commercially astute manner. Furthermore, Cookson (1997) emphasises the long-term, strategic visions of family textile firms of 18th and 19th century Yorkshire. The

'pragmatist' characterisation can also be observed in studies of craft production in developing countries, where accounts are given of producers changing designs, altering materials and adjusting quality in response to demand signals, either directly, or (more usually) through a tradesperson (Littlefield, 1979). Indeed, some authors have found that some 'ethnic' craftspeople are completely unconcerned about aesthetic or cultural notions such as artistic integrity or faithfulness to tradition in the face of the need to provide income for their families and communities (Lackey, 1988). Other studies reveal how developing country craftspeople adopt dual strategies, producing both 'real' craft items for the local market and 'pseudo' items for tourist and export markets.

In speciality food producer terms, this conceptualisation of the craftsperson has echoes in the commercially oriented Victorian enthusiasts, who consolidated production and gave brand identities to territorially distinctive products for the first time. The participants of Cope's study (1997), with their versatile and adaptive approaches, are also echoed in this conceptualisation. With respect to propensity for market oriented behaviour, this characterisation of craft producers suggests objectives and mindsets akin to those found in the market-oriented producer. Here, craft activities are engaged in for commercial rather than aesthetic reasons, and with the goal of economic exchange an important driving force. Similarly, there appears to be entrepreneurial characteristics in how such craft producers tap into market signals and exploit opportunities.

These two characterisations of the craft producer - the 'artist' and the 'pragmatist' - give clues to how speciality food enterprises may be oriented and how the producers, as individuals, may think and behave. According to one conceptualisation, it appears that some characteristics of craft producers are antithetical to market oriented behaviour, however in the other conceptualisation, characteristics appear more apposite to market oriented behaviour. However, there is a final implication to be considered from the previous discussion of craft

producers. This relates to the testimony by some authors that the boundaries between art, craft and industry are blurred. With this notion, it follows that a single enterprise may adopt 'shades' of artistic or pragmatic characteristics (or indeed industrial characteristics in the shape of mechanised production processes: this is alluded to by O'Conner, 1996). Thus, it may be possible to find producers who use industrially produced materials and automated processes but nevertheless regard their end products as 'traditional' and/or possessing an aesthetic value, which satisfies the producer more than successfully selling them to consumers. Alternatively, an artistic craftsperson with completely hand-made, aesthetically pleasing products may take pleasure from engaging with customers and customising products to meet their needs. As such, this notion of 'blurring' raises intriguing and complex possibilities regarding the propensity for market orientation in enterprises such as those producing speciality regional foods.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has drawn from four main strands of literature - marketing, small business, entrepreneurship and the sociology of craft production - in order to investigate the likely behaviour of speciality food producers, in particular their propensity to display market oriented behaviour. The findings have revealed some intriguing issues. First, the small business literature indicates that the lack of financial, time and personnel resources available to small-scale producers has a detrimental effect on their ability to adopt market oriented activities such as research and planning, as well as distracting them from an external and/or long-term, strategic focus. Second, many small firm managers have been shown not to prioritise growth objectives, considered to be an underpinning rationale of market oriented behaviour. The entrepreneurship literature further suggests that some small firm managers, through their backgrounds, drives and motivations, have characteristics of single-mindedness and impulsiveness which are contrary to market-oriented behaviour. Finally, there is evidence from studies of craft enterprises that some of the aesthetic and social ideals of craft

activity are antithetical to those of market orientation. On the basis of this literature therefore, it would seem that speciality food producers, as small-scale, craft-based enterprises, are quite unlikely to adopt market-oriented behaviour.

On the other hand, contrasting evidence for the propensity for market orientation may be found in the same strands of literature. Although small firms lack resources, evidence suggests that this gives them advantages of flexibility and innovativeness, enabling them to exploit changing market conditions and opportunities. Empirical studies show that some small firm managers do have a 'knack' for feeling the pulse of the market in this way. Overall, some characteristics of the entrepreneurial small firm manager, such as their predisposition to opportunity and propensity for risk-taking, do seem to be apposite to market-oriented behavioural characteristics. The studies of craft enterprises reviewed in this Chapter also give rise to findings which suggest that some craft producers have a long-standing tradition of acting in a market-oriented manner, and examples abound today of artisans who display commercial motivations and acumen. Indeed, given the proposed multiplicitous nature of contemporary craft enterprises, incorporating varying levels of artistry, craftsmanship and industry, it is uncertain whether the 'classic' view of the artisan producer as inner-directed and aloof from commercial considerations has much validity. Following the theories of Hornaday (1990), small-scale craft producers today may be more meaningfully conceptualised as having characteristics which overlap with larger-scale, or non-craft enterprises. Thus, there is much evidence in this Chapter to suggest that speciality food producers, as small-scale craft producers, have every propensity to act in a market oriented manner.

A final intriguing insight from the literature reviewed in this Chapter is that the nature of the markets that many small firms operate in, and the commitment which customers seem to show them, suggests that over-enthusiastic market-oriented behaviour may be counter-

productive. It may be then that the 'received wisdom' of market orientation is inappropriate for these producers. Overall, the literature gives rise to some important questions regarding speciality food producer behaviour. How do these producers perceive their enterprises and livelihoods? How do they take decisions with regard to their production processes, products and customers? Do they display entrepreneurial characteristics? Do they behave in a market-oriented manner? To what extent are craft-based concerns evident? Finally, how are these different characteristics reconciled? These questions are the subject of primary investigation, the methods of which are discussed in the following Chapter.

Chapter 4: Methods

4.1 Introduction

In preceding Chapters, literature has been reviewed relating to the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods, as well as to the profile and behaviour of the producers of these products. Despite gleaning some useful insights with respect to the research questions, much uncertainty still seems to surround the issues of what speciality regional foods are and who produces them. Thus, an empirical study was conducted to gather more specific data of direct relevance to the research questions, and to discover whether some of the assumptions made in the literature regarding the nature of speciality regional food products and producers are actually borne out in practice. The empirical study itself comprised a series of in-depth interviews with 20 speciality regional food producers in the north of England: the purpose of this Chapter is to set out the rationale, methods and procedures adopted for this study. First, a summary is given of the outstanding questions and issues emerging from the literature review, for which, it is argued, empirical work is required. Next, the nature of these questions and issues is contemplated, and the implications for research methodology discussed. Concluding that a qualitative approach is most appropriate for this study, the following sections then set out in more detail the nature and purpose of qualitative research, followed by description and explanation of the precise data collection, sampling and data analysis tools used for this study. In each section the theory and techniques of 'best practice' are presented, followed by an account of the specific procedures executed for this study. Finally, the Chapter concludes with a set of 'mini-biographies' of the 20 producers comprising the research sample, the purpose of which is to provide background and contextual information for the two results Chapters which follow.

4.2 A Summary of the Research Questions

This thesis has set out to investigate the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK today by focusing on two areas of inquiry: first, the nature and meaning of the

food products themselves, and second, the profile and characteristics of the producers who make them and bring them to the marketplace. The literature review has shed some interesting light on both these areas of inquiry. In terms of speciality regional food products, it has been identified that food and territory have a complex relationship, influenced, over the course of history, by macro-environmental forces which have served alternately to dilute, reinforce or obfuscate the strength of linkage between the two. Furthermore, it has also been identified from the literature review that these foods, as marketable exchange items, communicate things about territorial distinctiveness or typicity through their end product qualities. These qualities, whether they be 'rusticity', 'gourmet' or 'tradition', are also relevant to the understanding of how foods relate to territory, so also need to be taken account of in the investigation. The questions which emerge from the literature review therefore are first, given the complex social history underpinning the relationship between food and territory, how territorially distinctive *are* speciality regional foods on the market today? Do they have geophysical or human facets of typicity? To what degrees and extents may these facets be apparent? Second, given the proposal that a variety of contrasting end qualities may be associated with speciality regional foods, to what extent are these qualities apparent in practice? Is there any relationship between essential levels of territorial distinctiveness in speciality regional foods and the types of end qualities or appeals they project? These are the questions relating to speciality regional foods which were taken forward in the empirical study.

With respect to speciality regional food producers, the literature review found that these producers are likely to be small in size and that they employ some level of craft-based methods in their production processes. In terms of the consequences of these for behaviour however, much of the literature presented a rather pessimistic picture of the ability of producers such as these to think and act in ways conducive to commercial success. Thus, the limited resources of small firms were seen to militate against the adoption of market-oriented behaviour, whilst the mentalities and activities associated with craftspeople were seen to be opposed with both market-oriented and entrepreneurial

behaviour. Some authors did, however, argue that small firms can be market-oriented (although it may not be in an orthodox, textbook style), whilst others, drawing from the social history of craft production, noted that some craft producers have always been rather market-driven in mentality. A final point from the literature review highlighted how notions of craft, art and industry have become somewhat blurred over the course of the 20th century, to the extent that confident assertions about the essential nature of each are difficult to make. Overall therefore, a lot of uncertainties emerged with respect to the profile and behaviour of speciality regional food producers, giving rise to the following questions. First, is it valid to characterise speciality regional food producers as small, primarily craft-based enterprises? What, in fact, are their sizes and characteristics, and what can be said about their production processes? Second, how valid is the characterisation of speciality regional food producers as inward-looking, product deterministic, lifestyle-oriented craftspeople, uneasy with the commercial aspects of their enterprises and ill-disposed towards the market? Are some authors correct in asserting that small, craft-based producers *do* adopt market-oriented and entrepreneurial characteristics? How, in short, do speciality regional food producers actually think and act with respect to their enterprises? These are the questions relating to speciality regional food producers to take forward in the empirical study.

4.3 The Nature of the Research Questions

Having set out the substance of the research questions, consideration now needs to be made of the broad investigational approach required to address these questions within an empirical study. Some approaches are structured and quantitative, concerned with measuring pre-determined variables and testing hypothesised theories on statistically representative populations. Other approaches are more free-flowing and qualitative, concerned with developing deep, rich, context-specific explanations of phenomena. In any study, the nature of the research questions, and that of the phenomena they relate to, are important determinants of the type of approach adopted (Mason, 1996). With respect to the current study, a number of factors suggested that a qualitative approach would be

most appropriate. First, the fact that very few previous studies had been conducted on speciality regional food producers meant that the current study was commencing with many 'unknowns' regarding the characteristics of speciality regional foods and the behaviour of producers. This renders structured approaches - with their dependence on firm, pre-developed theories and tightly defined categories - inappropriate (Shaw, 1998). Second, the actual subject matter of the current research - whereby phenomena such as 'regional', 'traditional' or 'craft' embody complex, shifting meanings and possible multiple interpretations - implies a need for a qualitative approach where sensitivity to complex meanings and their construction become the focus of the study (Walker, 1985a). In addition, the current research sought to investigate specific questions in relation to producer *behaviour*: as Stanworth and Curran point out (1976), behaviour in small firms cannot be assumed to operate predictably according to prescribed influences or laws. Instead, small-scale producers think and feel and act according to multiple, diverse factors and processes, actively constructing meanings to make sense of their world. Again, this points towards a qualitative approach being most appropriate. Finally, in taking a qualitative approach to understanding the behaviour of speciality food producers, the current research responds to the criticisms of Harris and Ogbonna (1999), who argue that the behaviour of firms, with their complex socio-cultural influences and dimensions, cannot be adequately captured in the structured approaches of studies such as those conducted by Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990). Instead, these authors argue for more in-depth, complexity-sensitive approaches which allow for the capturing of more complete dimensions of behaviour. The next section sets out in more detail what is meant by qualitative research, and the different methods which can be pursued within this broad investigational approach.

4.4 What is Qualitative Research?

As may be appreciated from the previous section, qualitative research involves a flexible, context-specific investigational approach where the subject matter of the research is studied in all its complexity and multiplicity of meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), and

where the meaning of experiences or events is interpreted through the eyes of the research subjects (Henwood, 1996). However the starting point for understanding this approach, as with any research approach, is to explain the intellectual 'position' of the researcher with respect to two key facets: (i) *ontology* (what the researcher believes is valuable or meaningful to know about the world) and (ii) *epistemology* (how the researcher believes it is possible to gather or collect this knowledge from the world) (Mason, 1996). In marketing, as in many social science disciplines, the dominant intellectual position of researchers has been that of logical positivism (Brown, 1993). In research approaches inspired by this position, it is believed that objective, fixed, universal truths and realities exist in the world, independent of human agency, and that these can be discovered or revealed by researchers employing neutral tools and statistically valid measurements on representative sample populations (Silverman, 1993; Henwood, 1996). Logical positivism is an intellectual position derived from research in the natural and physical sciences (Woolgar, 1996), and one which gives rise to structured, quantitative empirical studies in the social sciences. Thus, if a logical positivist approach were taken to inspire the current study, speciality regional foods would be believed to comprise certain universally identifiable features and properties, the knowledge of which is then seen to be acquired much in the same way as a botanist might examine plants to develop a taxonomy of species. Similarly in this approach, the behaviour of producers is believed to comprise an identifiable set of elements and processes, the mechanisms of which operate according to certain universal laws, which can be gathered and tested much in the same way as a mechanical engineer might scrutinise and test the workings of an internal combustion engine.

Qualitative approaches are inspired by an intellectual position which rejects many, in some cases all, of the ontological and epistemological beliefs of logical positivism. First, researchers following a qualitative approach believe that unlike the natural world - with its underpinning fixed and permanent laws - in the social world of human beings phenomena do not exist untouched by the influence of social processes (Miles and Huberman, 1994;

Silverman, 1993; Walker, 1985a). Thus human beings, their behaviours and interactions, are not thought to have fixed, universal characteristics and truths which transcend specific contexts or processes; instead these phenomena are seen to exist in connection with the social world, shaped and influenced by it (Mason, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). To understand phenomena truly therefore, research subjects have to be analysed within their social context (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Second, researchers following a qualitative approach reject the notion of human beings as either passive 'stimulus-responders', 'inner-directed slaves' or 'cultural dupes' (Jones, 1985a), and instead conceive of them as active agents constructing and attributing meanings to make sense of their world (Silverman, 1993). Human beings are perceived as 'purposeful, goal-seeking, feeling, meaning-attributing and meaning responding creatures' (Hughes, 1976, cited in Walker, 1985a). Understanding of them must therefore incorporate understanding of these meanings and the processes of their construction (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

A third way in which qualitative approaches differ from logical positivism is that qualitative researchers are sceptical of the notion that it is possible to identify a faithful and universal relationship between signs or symbols representing phenomena and the reality or essence of those phenomena (Mason, 1996). Thus, for example, qualitative researchers are sceptical that observation of certain human behaviours in a research situation can be linked, confidently and universally, to sets of underlying motivations or feelings in the research subjects. Instead, it is believed that complex and diverse relationships may exist between what is observed or perceived by the researcher and underpinning meanings or 'truths' which may be interpreted by the researcher (Silverman, 1993). Finally, in qualitative approaches researchers tend to reject the premise of the researcher as a neutral, impartial, non-influencing research instrument (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Richardson, 1996). Instead, qualitative approaches tend to explicitly acknowledge the active role of the researcher as an agent who is selecting data, engaging with research subjects and creatively interpreting results. Recognition of

research activity as an intensely human, social process is perceived to be a valuable added dimension of qualitative inquiry (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Woolgar, 1996), further bolstered by explicit reflection on the process by the researcher him/herself.

4.5 Choice of Data Collection, Sampling and Data Analysis Methods

The main tenets of a qualitative investigational approach have now been presented. From these, it may be appreciated how the whole of the current investigation is based upon a 'qualitative' intellectual position. Thus from the start, speciality regional foods have been investigated from the perspective of embodying multiple, diverse properties and meanings, derived from historical, geophysical and 'market projection' influences. Similarly, the characteristics of speciality regional food producers have not been definitively categorised according to fixed criteria, nor has there been any attempt to 'model' their behaviour according to set factors or processes. This qualitative intellectual position, combined with the research questions derived from it, drives the more precise choice of research methods (data collection, sampling and analysis) employed for the empirical study. The choice is in fact quite varied, with a number of different methodological 'pathways' to follow (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Thus it is important that in any investigation, the rationale underpinning the choice of methods is clearly set out and understood (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Mason, 1996). This section describes and explains the particular methodological pathway selected for this empirical study. The classification of different qualitative approaches developed by Henwood (1996) is helpful in this regard, as it links the distinctive intellectual positions in qualitative inquiry with particular research methods appropriate to those positions (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Three Strands of Qualitative Inquiry

Broad Strand	Epistemology	Methodological Principles	Methods and Examples
I Reliability and validity	Empiricism	Discovery of valid representations	Content analysis
II. Generativity and grounding	Contextualism	Construction of intersubjective meaning	Grounded theory
III. Discursive and reflexive	Constructivism	Interpretative analysis	Discourse analysis

(Source: Henwood, 1996)

As can be seen, this classification offers three types of qualitative approach, with linked research methods, presented on the basis of their 'proximity' to the intellectual position of logical positivism. That is, the first strand is presented as sharing much of the perspective of quantitative approaches, whereas the third represents a strand of qualitative inquiry based on the most extreme rejection of the tenets of logical positivism. Thus, in Strand 1, Henwood argues that although researchers are aiming to obtain greater realism and contextual sensitivity in their studies than would be found in quantitative approaches (on the premise that knowledge can be gained from detailed observation of unstructured field data) these researchers share two beliefs of positivism: (i) the belief in an objective reality (albeit context-specific) which can be 'captured' through careful data collection and analysis, and (ii) the belief that it is possible to make confident links between what is perceived in the field ('the signs') and what these mean ('the signified'). An example of a research method which follows a Strand 1 approach is content analysis: the study of communicative and symbolic media, typically through a process of structured categorising, sorting and computation of words and phrases to draw inferences about underlying meanings (Kippendorf, cited in Henwood, 1996). In Strand 2, as in Strand 1, researchers are concerned with close and detailed scrutiny of field data to develop understandings of the world which are context specific. However in Strand 2, researchers are also concerned to build in what Henwood describes as "all the multiplicities, variations and complexities of participants' worlds" in a more "older-style,

naturalistic" qualitative way, using analytical methods such as grounded theory. Strand 2 approaches do however share the positivist's belief in the researcher's ability to make faithful links between 'sign' and 'signified'. Strand 3 approaches differ in believing that there can be no firm foundations for knowledge and identities in the contemporary fragmented world, thus it is spurious to attempt to develop understanding on the basis of making links between representations of phenomena and essences of phenomena. Instead, all phenomena are perceived as 'texts' to be deconstructed, and it is the analysis and theorising of shifting patterns of texts which comprise the research methods under this strand, for example, discourse analysis.

Of the above Strands of qualitative inquiry presented in the Henwood classification, it is Strand 2 which was followed for this empirical study. Thus, the perspective of the study was to regard the subject matter as comprising complex, multiple meanings, the understanding of which could best be developed through close examination of their properties and characteristics in their 'natural' context. In addition, the stance of the study was to believe that meanings relating to the subject matter are constructed, and thus, understanding of the subject matter must incorporate, crucially, understanding of the construction process. Within this stance, it was also believed that a faithful relationship could be made between the signs or symbols representing phenomena, and the underlying 'essence' of these phenomena, although it was recognised that such relationships may be complex and fluid, requiring careful and critical scrutiny (Mason, 1996).

With this particular qualitative position determined, an appropriate accompanying set of data collection, sampling and analytical techniques emerges. Specifically, the use of in-depth interviewing of speciality regional food producers was chosen as the data collection method as it offered an appropriate means of getting direct access to producer perceptions of their products and enterprises '*in situ*', where the active construction of their meanings could be examined. Furthermore, through interviewees' retrospective accounts, this method offered a practical way of accessing details of personal experiences and decision-

making processes amongst a set of busy, time-restricted professionals (McCracken, 1988). In terms of sampling method, purposive sampling was most appropriate, in view of its emphasis on selection of interviewees on the basis of value to the research questions and developing emerging theory, rather than on statistical representativeness and testing pre-existing theory. Finally, the techniques of grounded theory were most appropriate for data analysis, on the basis of offering context specific, multiple-meaning-sensitive theory development from the building of links and relationships between representations of phenomena and their meanings. Having explained the rationale behind the choice of data collection, sampling and data analysis methods, the next sections now go on to describe and explain the precise techniques used for each of these methods in the current study.

4.6 In-depth Interviewing: Theory and Best Practice

Described in an early study as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Bingham and Moore, 1959, cited in Banister et al, 1995), an in-depth interview may be described as a verbal interaction between two people where the agenda or discussion guide is only loosely determined in advance (Patton, 1990), where there is flexibility in the precise subject matter covered, and where the interviewee or participant (Banister et al, 1995) is given freedom to express their ideas, feelings and perceptions in their own words (Jones, 1985a). The aim of in-depth interviewing is to 'enter the perspective' of another person, to discover what is 'in and on' their mind (Patton, 1990), so that the subjective meanings which they attribute to phenomena may be revealed (Banister et al, 1995). Overall, the literature stresses how in-depth interviewing is a complicated, shifting, social process, giving rise to very 'live', 'human' experiences which cannot be replicated exactly. To be an effective data collection method therefore, in-depth interviewing requires careful preparation and management by the researcher, with conscious awareness of the procedural judgements and decisions being made and the likely impact of these on the outcome of the process (Jones, 1985a). Three key areas of consideration arise with in-depth interviewing: the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, the

construction of the interview and the implementation of the interview. In each area, a number of delicate trade-offs or balances have to be struck.

First, with respect to interviewer-interviewee relations, the literature emphasises how participants in depth interviews, by virtue of the fact that they are able to express themselves more freely than in structured interviews, are able to project 'public faces', or personas of themselves which can then influence the content and style of their testimony. For example, a speciality food producer may project himself as the owner of a cash-strapped small enterprise, as a pillar of the local business community, or as a caring parent or grandparent. Indeed, all may be presented by a single interviewee over the course of one in-depth interview. Either wilfully or unconsciously therefore, in-depth interview participants present 'legitimising scripts' which the researcher must attempt to identify and get behind (Jones, 1885a). Furthermore, it is recognised that interviewees may use these personas proactively to exert power or status in the interview, or to get what they want out of the experience. Interviewees may adopt bullying, sceptical, mistrustful, agreeable or compliant personal fronts, which can all have an influence on the nature of their testimony. Where in-depth interviewing involves 'elite' participants (e.g. those with recognised social, political or economic power within a community) these problems are exacerbated as such interviewees tend to have heightened skills in manipulating the interpersonal dynamics of the interview situation (Dexter, 1970).

To deal with the above issues, it is important for researchers to think carefully about how they present themselves to interviewees, and the consequences that his will have for interviewees' perceptions of them and the interview itself (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Banister et al, 1995). For example, interviews may proceed differently according to whether the researcher presents him/herself as an 'academic', a 'native', or a 'learner' (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Researchers must therefore consider the possible impacts of these self-presentations in relation to their particular investigations, and select the most appropriate means of self-presentation. Issues of interviewer-interviewee relationships

can also be addressed by considering and finding the most appropriate balance between formality and informality. Too much formality represses free and full expression of ideas and can increase interviewees' anxieties over the process, however too much informality means the researcher may find it hard to address more sensitive topics, or keep the discussion 'on track', for fear of introducing tension into the relationship (Patton, 1990). Overall, it is recommended that researchers seek to establish a balance between 'rapport' or 'neutrality' (Patton, 1990) and 'over-identification' (Fontana and Frey, 1994), and between 'friendliness' and 'overagreement' (Berent, 1966). Issues of interviewer-interviewee relationships can also be addressed through the negotiation of a 'contract' between both parties at the start of the interview (Banister et al, 1995), where, for example, guarantees regarding anonymity and use of the findings can be made. Irrespective of how the relationship is managed however, the literature does finally emphasise the value of *informing* the interviewee about the nature of the research and the process before the interview commences. Without this awareness, the interviewee is likely to become frustrated and demotivated, which has negative consequences for the interview process. In informing in advance however, the researcher should be careful not to overly influence the nature of the interviewee's testimony (Mason, 1996), nor give away any of his/her preconceptions about the subject matter under discussion (Patton, 1990).

The key balance to be struck with respect to the construction of the interview is one between structure and ambiguity (Jones, 1985a). Although in-depth interviews are intended to be flexible and free-flowing, there is little value in 'presupposition-less' research (Jones, 1985a), and thus, in-depth interviews need to be planned in advance so that topic areas of importance are identified and covered (Mason, 1996). Guided by the research questions and informed by reading of the literature therefore, the researcher determines in advance what areas are to be addressed in the interview, and why these are important, yet leaves enough open-ness in the process to allow him/herself to be 'surprised' by what is forthcoming in the interviewee's testimony (McCracken, 1988).

To construct an in-depth interview, the researcher devises a discussion guide. This represents a 'checklist' of the afore-mentioned important topics and subject headings (Patton, 1990), which keeps the discussion focused whilst allowing interviewees to elaborate their perspectives and experiences. McCracken (1988) likens the discussion guide to a 'route map' which shows the broad ground to be covered, but which doesn't specify the exact itinerary. The discussion guide should be subject to some modifications over time, as the data gleaned from previous interviews feeds into the development of the researchers knowledge and understanding (Mason, 1996).

The final set of considerations in depth interviewing - that of actual implementation of the interview - involves the creation of a climate whereby the interviewee gives a free and full testimony under the guidance of the interviewer. Overall, the aim is to bring the interviewee 'within sight' of the important topic areas and then 'encourage them to go' (McCracken. 1988). Ideally, the interviewer should be as unobtrusive as possible during the interview, only interrupting to encourage elaboration, return to a point, or change the subject (Berent, 1966). This necessitates a wide range of social and intellectual skills, as the interviewer is required to identify and encourage elaboration on key topics; be open to unforeseen areas of interest; spot when the discussion is straying into less relevant areas; and 'look ahead' down conversational pathways to judge when to change a topic; all the while being sensitive to the changing interpersonal dynamics of the interview process. To address these challenges, McCracken (1988) offers a helpful guide to depth interview questioning. First, he recommends that depth interviews commence with questioning of a biographical nature: as Patton (1990) notes, asking interviewees to begin by talking about themselves is often an easy and 'safe' topic area which creates a comfortable atmosphere and encourages future elaborations on more difficult topics. Next, McCracken recommends that key topic areas are broached with 'grand tour' questions: broad, open questions which indicate the subject matter of importance but which do not suppose or assume anything of the nature of this subject matter. Following 'grand tour' questions, the interviewer is then recommended to use 'floating prompts': gentle,

unobtrusive prompts, such as repetitions of the interviewee's last statement or paralinguistic cues such as the 'raised eyebrow', which encourage further expansion on key terms without influencing the nature of that expansion. Finally, McCracken recommends 'planned prompts' to furnish elaborations on points which would otherwise not be forthcoming, for example, where the topic is more sensitive or controversial. Such prompts might include presentation of contrasting views to those expressed by the interviewee, or asking the interviewee to recall an exceptional incident in relation to the topic. The pattern of 'grand tour', 'floating' and 'planned' prompts is then repeated for each topic area in the interview until sufficient data have been collected on all key questions of importance to the research. To this guidance, Patton also highlights the importance of avoiding dichotomous and multiple questions, and also cautions against the use of 'why' questions, on the basis that such questions imply a rational explanation when the interviewee may not, in reality, have one.

4.6.1 In-depth Interviewing in the Current Study: Procedures and Reflections

Much of the information and guidance presented in the preceding sections was used to inform the in-depth interviewing procedures for the current study. First, in terms of relationship establishment with interviewees, a balance was struck between clarifying to participants why they were being interviewed and over-informing them of the precise nature of the research questions. Thus, in initial personalised letters posted to each interviewee (Appendix 1), the broad purpose of the research was conveyed ('to investigate experiences and perceptions of small to medium-sized food producers in the region'), without mention of 'problematic' terms or concepts of interest such as 'territorial identities', 'tradition', 'craft' or 'marketing'. Similarly, in follow up phone calls and in preliminary discussions with participants prior to the interviews themselves, only a broad outline of the topic areas of interest was revealed. In terms of the issue of researcher 'presentation', the epithet 'a researcher from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Food Marketing at the University of Newcastle' was used by way of introduction to all participants. However, the precise attire and mannerisms adopted for

each interview varied according to the environment in which the interview was anticipated to take place: where it was known that the interview would take place in a cheese-makers dairy or in the participant's own kitchen, some 'dressing down' was deemed appropriate to 'fit in' with the surroundings. In other cases where interviews were anticipated in office surroundings, a more formal self-presentation was adopted to give a more 'serious', professional impression. This was deemed appropriate to such interviewees who had attributes of 'elites', that is, they were recognised as having some social and economic standing in their local community, and who presided over firms of 20 or more employees.

In terms of interview construction, a discussion guide was devised which followed the guidelines set out by Jones (1985a), Patton (1990) and McCracken (1988) above. Thus, a set of key topic headings was identified to be covered in the interview, under which further, more specific, subjects were also delineated. Following this process, the final discussion guide specified five main topic headings: biographical details of the interviewee; products; location; customers and marketing. It should be noted that these topic headings, along with more specific subject areas, were specified in this way to act as an aide-memoire during the interview: actual questioning did not involve the use of specific terms such as 'marketing' or 'territory', for example, as it was the purpose of the research to understand interviewees' *own* perceptions of such terms. The final discussion guide used for this study is presented in Appendix 2. In terms of implementation of the interviews, the McCracken's (1988) pattern of 'grand tour' questions, followed by 'floating' and 'planned' prompts was used to elicit as full a testimony as possible from the interviewees, without over-directing or influencing the nature of those testimonies. Over the course of the 20 interviews conducted, key themes and issues became easier to spot, and comparisons could be made with previous testimonies. This enabled questioning to become more focused and less exploratory in the latter interviews. In addition to written notes made during and after each interview, all interviews were fully tape-recorded for later transcription, permission to use a tape

recorder having been sought at the start of each interview. In spite of anticipating the length of interviews to be approximately 30-45 minutes - and this was the expected length of time proposed to interviewees at the start - no interview lasted less than 1 hour. Indeed, all interviewees were found to be unexpectedly generous with their time, some talking for as long at 2 to 3 hours.

In view of the fact that a valuable aspect of qualitative research involves its reflexivity (Mason, 1996; Jones, 1985a), this section concludes with some reflections on the actual experience of interviewing speciality regional food producers in the current study. Overall, it was found to be a challenging, exciting and rewarding experience. The unexpectedly generous and forthcoming nature of the participants was a bonus in terms of data collection, as this resulted in a rich, deep and varied set of perceptions and experiences of relevance to the research questions. The fact that interviewees were willing and able to talk at length about matters of importance to the investigation was also reassuring and confidence giving in view of the applied nature of the research, and the desire to offer policy-relevant recommendations from the results. However, the high degree of co-operation from interviewees did lead to a sense of indebtedness to them, in turn making it difficult sometimes to broach controversial subjects or seek explanations for opinions and feelings which might have given rise to tension in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. This problem was further reinforced by the fact that the interviewees themselves tended to be inspirational, charismatic individuals with an infectious sense of enthusiasm for what they did and why they did it. In these circumstances, conscious awareness of the need to pursue difficult topics was found to be in itself quite helpful, leading to the tactical changing of subjects where necessary to allow for re-broaching of difficult topics at the most conducive times.

A final difficulty encountered in in-depth interviewing for the current study was the ability of some interviewees to construct solid public personas or legitimising scripts which subsequently became problematic to 'get behind' (as discussed by Jones, 1985a, above).

These personas took two distinct forms. First, a number of interviewees, as managers of successful small enterprises in their local areas, had been subject to a fair degree of local press attention and had experienced numerous visits from journalists wanting to hear the 'story of their success'. In some cases, interviewees interpreted the current research as another example of this kind of journalistic investigation, and thus had a 'success story script' which they were clearly ready to wield in the interview. In these circumstances, interviewees were encouraged away from their 'scripts' by questions on research-relevant topics which did not feature in the usual 'story': by the time the story was returned to, interviewees could then describe it from a fresher perspective. The second type of persona presented by interviewees was that of the 'salesman/woman': that is, the interview was taken to be an opportunity to speak positively about or 'sell' the enterprise and its products to the interviewer, as if the interviewer was a supermarket buyer or other commercial representative. In these circumstances, techniques proposed by McCracken were employed, such as offering contrasting views to the 'sales pitch' or asking for exceptional incidents in the face of the 'positive spin'. In spite of the techniques employed however, it would be false not to acknowledge that with some interviewees, the personas or legitimising scripts remained throughout the course of the interview, with only occasional chinks in the armour revealed. In these cases however, acknowledgement that the persona or scripts existed at all was in itself a valuable insight, and one that provided a basis for further reflection on such interviewees' testimonies during the data analysis phase of the research.

4.7 Purposive Sampling: Theory and Best Practice

Thus far, this Chapter has explained the broad investigational approach undertaken for the current study and the method employed to collect or generate data. Having described the considerations and procedures involved in depth interviewing, this section now sets out the selection and recruitment procedures for the 20 interviewees comprising the empirical study. The method employed was theoretical, or purposive sampling. First, the method

itself is described, then the specific procedures adopted for this study are explained and reflected upon.

Under investigational approaches based on logical positivist intellectual stances and quantitative methods, the key concern with sampling in an empirical study is to obtain a sample which is statistically *representative* of a wider population, thus allowing *generalisation* of the views or actions of that sample to the population (Mason, 1996). In qualitative approaches however, representativeness and generalisability are not the prime concern in a research sample (Burgess, 1993). Not only would it be very difficult to reach the kind of sample sizes needed to achieve representativeness using labour-intensive data collection methods such as in-depth interviewing, but qualitative approaches are also based on an intellectual stance which is sceptical of the validity and usefulness of research findings from statistically representative sample populations. Instead, qualitative approaches are concerned with gathering rich, context-specific data, the meaning and understanding of which are not intended to extend far beyond the precise empirical cases studied by the researcher. A different kind of method is needed to select cases for a qualitative empirical study than the sampling methods found conventionally in quantitative research. This method is known as theoretical (Burgess, 1993) or purposive (Mason, 1996) sampling.

The aim with purposive sampling is to select cases for inclusion in an empirical study on the basis of their importance and relevance to the investigation. Rather than trying to achieve representativeness therefore, the researcher is trying to obtain the most relevant data for the research questions, with the size of the sample being determined by the extent to which the researcher perceives he/she has gained sufficient access to the data to be able to make valuable comparisons between the cases (Mason, 1996). A theoretical sample may be defined therefore as a small group of cases which contains specific characteristics, experiences and behaviours of relevance to the research problem (Walker, 1985b). Drawing from the literature, the researcher has three key considerations to take account of

with theoretical sampling: first, how to determine what kind of cases are relevant to the research problem; second, how to select further cases as data collection proceeds; and third, how to know when sufficient cases have been collected such that sampling can cease.

To address the above considerations, the literature advises that the qualitative researcher takes a carefully planned approach to theoretical sampling (e.g. Mason, 1996; Morton-Williams, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Thus, although the researcher is not seeking to develop a structured sampling frame such as that found in quantitative research, it is deemed good practice to set out a flexible target or quota of cases to be achieved, with a breakdown of the types of dimension or characteristic of importance to the research, which should be identifiable, in some combination, within the quota (Morton-Williams, 1985). Important dimensions and characteristics will vary according to the aims of the investigation and the precise research questions involved, however the researcher should always explain the basis for the particular choice of dimensions, and comment on the implications of these for the findings derived from the final sample (Walker, 1985b). In terms of the issue of collecting further cases as the research proceeds, the literature highlights how in qualitative research, data collection is usually interactive with data analysis, thus any target or quota of cases needs to be reflected on and revised in the light of new evidence and understanding (Mason, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Theoretical sampling often proceeds therefore in steps or phases, whereby an initial set of cases are sampled and data collected from them, the preliminary analysis of which leads to refinement of the choice of the next set of cases, and so on (Burgess, 1993). In theoretical sampling therefore, cases are 'incrementally specified' (Walker, 1985b). In some situations, existing cases or interviewees may be asked to suggest future cases, on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of a sector or community of interest to the research: this is known as 'snowball' sampling (Burgess, 1993; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In terms of the issue of knowing when to terminate purposive sampling, Walker (1985b) proposes that a purposive sample may be deemed

complete when three criteria are met: (i) there are no new suggestions for cases forthcoming; (ii) the marginal insight from additional interviewees levels off; (iii) the marginal costs of obtaining additional insights levels off. Overall therefore, what the researcher is looking for is a state of 'theoretical saturation', when the gathering of data from new cases serves to reinforce or confirm, rather than shed new light on, the theory being developed from the findings of the total sample.

In addition to the above considerations in theoretical sampling, the researcher has to be aware of one key problem or pitfall: that is the selection of 'reinforcing' cases not on the basis of the development of a robust theory, but rather on the basis that the researcher has not thought widely and critically enough about the relationship between the sample chosen and the population from which it is derived (Mason, 1996). Qualitative researchers adopting theoretical sampling have to be very careful not to select cases which 'fit in' readily with the theory that the researcher is developing. This will result in a limited and impoverished theory (Mason, 1996). For example, in the current investigation of speciality regional food producers, sampling only those producers who are cheese-makers, or only those whose firms have a long, inter-generational history of production, will result in only a limited understanding of who speciality food producers are and what their products mean in the UK today. To overcome this problem, the literature recommends that researchers deliberately set out to incorporate 'contrasting or 'contrary' cases: that is, cases which are perceived likely to possess alternative characteristics, experiences and behaviours to those cases already sampled (Pidgeon, 1996). In terms of the current investigation, this would mean including in the sample speciality regional food producers engaged in the production of different types of food, or those with different lengths of experience. In incorporating contrary cases however, the researcher must also be careful not to 'stray' too far from the original aims of the research, and end up incorporating cases of little relevance to the research questions. Overall, the researcher has to consider carefully the relationship between the sample and

the population it is derived from, and be clear as to the bases for choosing the sample (Mason, 1996; Walker, 1985b).

4.7.1 Purposive Sampling in the Current Study: Procedures and Reflections

Following the guidelines from the literature described above, the sample for the current empirical study was set out as follows. First, the research questions were turned to and the choice of cases to be included in the study considered in the light of these questions. Overall, the research sought to investigate speciality regional food products and producers. This meant that not *all* food products and producers were of interest to this study, but a certain type. In setting the boundaries to capture this type however, a delicate balance had to be struck between using overly restrictive definitions which would lead to the recruitment of self-reinforcing cases, and employing such broad or flexible criteria as to render chosen cases indistinguishable from any other food products or producers. Therefore, it was decided that *'evidence of territorial distinctiveness'* should be the baseline dimension for selection of a case in this study. This was on the basis that if a case did not show evidence of territorial distinctiveness even at the broadest level (whether this be tradition, or craft production methods, or special ingredients, or use of a place-name), then it was beyond the bounds of relevance for this study. Some possession or demonstration of territorial distinctiveness was necessary to render data collection from each case appropriate, given the aims of this investigation.

Having set out the most fundamental dimension for case selection, the next phase in the sampling procedure involved determining how the other key characteristics or dimensions of speciality regional food producers should be specified in the sample. According to some authors, it is good practice in purposive sampling to set out the key characteristics desired amongst sample cases and use these as a basis for case selection, so that the final sample displays something of an 'even spread' of cases according to these key characteristics. In the current study however, with its emphasis on investigating the nature and characteristics of speciality regional foods, it was crucial to avoid pre-

determination of key characteristics: this would simply lead to self-reinforcing, circulatory arguments in the research. Thus, the approach taken to pinpointing key characteristics of cases in advance was to set out some of the dimensions upon which all cases in the sample could be compared (e.g. size and age of firm). However, instead of then deliberately setting out to gather cases with characteristics at the 'extremes' of these dimensions (e.g. deliberately sampling microbusinesses, small and large-sized firms), these dimensions were used to reflect critically on each case post-interview, and on the profile of the sample as a whole, in the analysis phases of the research. Indeed, the only dimension where cases were selected in a pre-determined fashion was 'sector type'. Thus, cases were deliberately selected from a wide variety of sectors, from dairy to meats, fish, beverages and baked goods. This was considered appropriate given the study's aim to investigate *foods* rather than one specific type of product, for example cheeses, sausages or beers. Having then determined the key dimensions of cases and their role in the selection process, a tentative decision was made of the number of cases to comprise the total sample. In terms of sample size, the literature varies in guidelines from eight (McCracken, 1988) to 30 or more (e.g. Mason, 1996). For this study therefore, a flexible target of 15-20 producers was determined at the outset, with recognition of the fact that in purposive sampling the sample size is 'incrementally specified' (Walker, 1985b), and not determined finally until analysis informs the researcher that sufficient cases have been collected.

In terms of determining where these 15-20 producers were drawn from, it was deemed desirable, from the point of view of giving context-specific results, to focus on one geographic area. However, the possibility of the results being influenced by the particular socio-economic circumstances, or infrastructure of one particular region was considered less desirable: that is, efforts were made to avoid a 'Cumbrian' effect, or a 'Yorkshire' effect in the results. Therefore, the 'north of England' (taken to be the counties of Northumberland, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Lancashire) was chosen as the geographic area of study, combining sufficient breadth of socio-economic and

infrastructural circumstances with some context specificity. The north of England was an appropriate study area given the specific subject matter under investigation: although this area was deemed to contain a number of well-known traditional regional food products, it was sufficiently diverse an area not to have a single, renowned public 'identity' promulgated by the area tourist board (as for example, Cumbria or Yorkshire alone might have). This lack of 'umbrella' identity underpinning the study area was felt to offer up more intriguing possibilities with respect to producers' individual perceptions of territorial identities in their products.

Having set out the key dimensions of the sample, its approximate size and geographic location, the next phase in the sampling procedure involved the practical procedures for actually selecting and recruiting cases to include in the study. First, the research required a 'frame' or listing of the total population from which the sample could be drawn. For this study, the listings drawn from were the membership lists of the Food From Britain Speciality Food Groups existing in the north of England, that is, the Yorkshire Pantry (for Yorkshire) and North West Fine Foods (for Cumbria and Lancashire). In Northumberland, where no Speciality Food Group existed at the time of the study, an alternative listing of speciality food producers for the region, compiled by Northumberland County Council, was drawn from instead. The precise selection of interviewees from each of these lists then followed the guidelines set out in the literature. Thus, entries for each of the producers in the listings were scrutinised for evidence of the key criterion of territorial distinctiveness in products. To gain further assistance in the judgement of listings entries and potential interviewees, in-depth interviews were held with each of the co-ordinators of the Speciality Food Groups, whose job it was to administer and manage the Group. In Northumberland, an employee of the County Council, who was involved with the setting up of a similar food group in the region, was interviewed instead. In each case, the co-ordinators were informed of the background to the research and had the aims and questions explained to them. These co-ordinators then offered their own advice on suitable cases to include in the research, based on their

personal and in-depth knowledge of the producers in their areas. This advice proved very valuable to take account of when drawing up a shortlist of potential interviewees.

The preparatory work of setting out the key dimensions of the sample, its approximate size and broad geographic location, and the determination of the procedures for selection, set the context for the actual sample selection which ensued. In practice, following the guidelines proposed by the literature, sampling took place in a set of 'phases', in between which data were collected from interviewees and subject to some preliminary analysis, which helped to refine the precise sample profile of the next 'phase'. Thus a systematic process was followed whereby clusters of potential firms and their products were examined, with the decision whether or not to include them being made on a considered, case by case basis, with reference to the fundamental characteristic of territorial distinctiveness, as well as to the accumulating data and insights gained from interviews as they were conducted. In all of this, the key dimensions such as firm size and age were reflected upon too. Indeed in practice, firm size became an area of careful deliberation and judgement: although inclusion of only small firm cases appeared to be overly restrictive and self-determinatory, 'large' firms did not seem to fit the study's aims, as they implied enterprises where owner/managers were not directly involved in the kind of day to day production activities that were of such interest to the investigation. Thus, the judgement made about inclusion of firms in the sample according to size was that firms of any size could be relevant as long as there was evidence that the owner/managers (i.e. the interviewees) were still involved in 'getting their hands dirty' in the production process. This was on the basis that where firms were so large as to render owner/managers administrators, research questions relating to producers' involvement in, and perceptions of, production activities could not be adequately addressed.

Finally, in following the above procedures for selecting cases, literature guidelines regarding the importance of including 'contrary' categories was adhered to, with a number of interviewees being chosen which, although conforming to the key criterion

and the desirable dimensions, appeared to offer quite different characteristics to previous interviewees. Following the phased procedure of sampling, analysis and refinement of future samples, theoretical saturation was deemed to have been reached on the collection of data from 20 interviewees. The final sample profile for the empirical study is presented in Table 4.2. More comment and elaboration of these interviewees is made in the concluding sections of this Chapter. In the next section however, there is description and explanation of the methods and procedures adopted for analysing the data collected from these producers.

Table 4.2 Profile of Interviewees in Empirical Study (n=20)

No.	Location	Activity	Age of Firm (generations)	Size of Firm (employees)	Date of Interview
1	Yorkshire	game and poultry, delicatessen	2	42	5/8/97
2	Northumberland	beef, pork & dairy, farm shop	1	<10	29/8/97
3	Northumberland	Microbrewer	1	<10	28/8/97
4	Cumbria	Soft drinks and spring water	3	10	29/2/00
5	Cumbria	Cheesemaker	1	<10	23/2/00
6	Cumbria	Herdwick lamb	1	<10	12/8/97
7	Yorkshire	Bakery	3	80	21/8/97
8	Yorkshire	Cheesemaker	3	50-100	4/9/97
9	Yorkshire	Confectioner	3	10-50	19/8/97
10	Northumberland	Fresh Soups	1	10-50	13/8/97
11	Lancashire	Potted Shrimps	3	<10	6/3/00
12	Yorkshire	Cheesemaker	1	<10	18/8/97
13	Lancashire	Cheesemaker	3	80	25/10/99
14	Northumberland	Cheesemaker	1	10-50	27/8/97
15	Northumberland	Smoked Fish	4	10	3/9/97
16	Northumberland	Bee-keeper	2	10-12	28/8/97
17	Cumbria	Fish, Game, Potted Shrimps	1	10	29/2/00
18	Yorkshire	Microbrewer	1	50-100	2/9/97
19	Cumbria	Organic craft bakery	1	10-50	13/8/97
20	Cumbria	Specialist pork products	7	10-50	12/8/97

4.8 Data Analysis Using Grounded Theory: Theory and Best Practice

The data analysis method adopted for the empirical study was that of grounded theory. As explained in the opening sections of this Chapter, grounded theory represents something of a 'half-way house' between qualitative analytical approaches which share much of the intellectual stance of logical positivism, and those approaches which are the most extreme rejections of logical positivism (Henwood, 1996; Pigeon, 1996). Thus, grounded theory is based on an ontological position where the world is perceived to be made up of complex, social phenomena offering different signs, symbols and representations of meaning (an 'interpretivist' stance), but it is based on an epistemological position whereby understanding of these phenomena is deemed possible via the gathering and scrutiny of testimonies from relevant 'real world' actors or agents (a 'positivist' stance) (Mason, 1996). As such, the analytical process involved is one of 'inductive derivation' of theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990): the close, systematic examination of real-world testimonies (such as the transcripts from in-depth interviews), conducted with sensitivity to the multiple meanings potentially contained within those testimonies, and undertaken with reference to the specific social contexts giving rise to those testimonies. Throughout, the researcher is guided by his or her understanding of what is important in the testimonies, this understanding being derived from his or her reading of the literature as well as from the research questions (Pidgeon, 1996). These lend what is known as 'theoretical sensitivity' to the process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Over the course of this analytical process, the researcher attempts to build a context-specific 'thick description' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of the nature and meaning of phenomena, whilst also constructing an explanation of the social mechanisms or inter-relationships surrounding or underpinning these phenomena.

Such are the broad aims and intellectual position of grounded theory, but what does this method of data analysis involve in practical terms? Following in-depth interviews with 20 speciality food producers, each lasting in practice 1-3 hours, and each fully transcribed from tape, a wealth of textual data was accumulated. In practical terms, grounded theory

offers a set of analytical procedures to help the researcher systematically break down or 'fracture' (Walker, 1985b) such a vast body of data, to allow a process of restructuring, 'making sense' or 'giving meaning' (Jones, 1985b) to take place. However, a number of recent authors caution against the presentation of grounded theory as a single, fixed, precise template of techniques followed slavishly in order to gain access to the 'truth' (e.g. Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). Instead, the method is advocated as a flexible tool to 'engage actively' with the data, giving stimulation to the researcher's 'theoretical imagination' (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). Grounded theory analytical procedures are offered therefore more as a set of broad guidelines rather than as a single, authentic fixed template. This is not least because, as Dey (1999) discusses, disagreements have occurred between Glaser and Strauss, the recognised 'inventors' of grounded theory, in the wake of the revisionist work of Strauss and Corbin (1990). With this in mind, the following description of key analytical steps and stages in grounded theory is a synthesis of a number of different authors' recommendations, including those of Strauss and Corbin (1990), Pidgeon (1996), Pidgeon and Henwood (1996), Jones (1985b), Mason (1996) and Walker (1985b). As a final point however, recognition is also made of the fact that grounded theory analysis can be facilitated by software packages such as NUD.IST (QSR, 1995) which store, retrieve and manage textual data. However, the qualitative researcher has to think carefully about the limitations of such software packages and ensure that they are used appropriately within the context of the particular study being conducted (Mason, 1996; Richardson and Richardson, 1994).

In the face of a large body of textual data, the first analytical step in grounded theory involves a process of *initial coding* of the data. Thus, the researcher systematically reads through the data and begins to attach codewords or 'concept labels' to pieces of data recognised as having a discrete meaning. The pieces of data may be single words, expressions, sentences or complete paragraphs of text (Jones, 1985b). However, what they will have in common is a 'coherent meaning' (Spiggle, 1994): they encapsulate something of discrete potential relevance and/or importance to the research. Codes or

concept labels themselves are devised by the researcher on the basis of (i) the research questions and theoretical context of the study ('researcher' labels), and (ii) what emerges more spontaneously from the data (inductive or 'in vivo' labels) (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). Therefore what is stressed in the literature is the need for the researcher to strike a balance between being driven by his or her theoretical understanding and being led by what the data tells him or her. A constant interplay or 'flip flop' (Pidgeon, 1996) between research focus and open-mindedness is needed throughout the analytical process in order to generate valuable grounded theories. Overall, a state of 'empathic neutrality' needs to be maintained with respect to the data (Silverman, 1993). At this early stage of the process however, both 'researcher' and 'in vivo' concept labels are likely to be quite straightforward, categorical terms *describing* the contents of the text pieces, rather than offering any interpretative or analytical terms (Mason, 1996).

The next key stage in the process entails what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call *axial coding*. This involves examining, scrutinising and comparing concept labels - and the data attached to them - in order to identify links or relationships between them, and to build more abstract, 'higher order' categories which have something analytical or interpretative to say about the concept labels clustered within them. This process involves the researcher having to think about the properties of the categories he or she is developing and how they are inter-related, continually asking questions of the data and of his or her own analytical thoughts, leading to the re-forming and modification of codes and categories. Within this process, authors such as Jones (1985b) and Henwood and Pidgeon (1996) recommend the use of 'mental maps', or tentative diagrammatic flow charts, to assist the development and testing of ideas about the integration and inter-relating of codes and categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) additionally offer a 'paradigmatic model', or set of dimensions relating to any one idea or phenomena, which is designed to help the researcher develop their thoughts about the 'dynamics' of their codes and categories. Thus, the model encourages the researcher to think about the causal conditions, or incidents leading up to the occurrence of the phenomena they

identify in their categories; the contexts and intervening conditions surrounding these phenomena; and also the action strategies - and consequences of these - which relate to the phenomena. By making use of such maps and models, the researcher can begin to identify *causality* within and between the codes and categories being developed, such causality being crucial to the development of a meaningful theory or explanation of the identified phenomena.

The final stage in the process of grounded theory is that described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as *selective coding*. This involves a continued process of comparison of categories, scrutinising and reflecting upon them, and continuing to develop and build links between them. By this stage, the researcher is working mostly with the abstract categories that have been developed to represent and interpret the data, rather than with the raw data itself, although original texts may have to be returned to in order to test or verify an idea that is being developed (Jones, 1985b, Walker, 1985b). Further recourse to notes, diagrammatic representations and models are all recommended to stimulate and support analytical thoughts and ideas (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). Throughout this continued process, the researcher needs to input his or her theoretical understandings, thus maintaining the valuable 'flip flop' intellectual state which balances open-ness to the data with theoretical sensitivity. What the researcher is trying to achieve from this final stage of analysis is a satisfactory picture of what is going on in the data and an explanation of how things appear to work: what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call an 'analytical storyline' or a 'narrative theory'. Overall, the researcher is deemed to have arrived at a satisfactory grounded theory when his or her explanations combine 'conceptual density', or sufficient, relevant abstraction and interpretation, with faithfulness to, or good fit with, the data from which the theory has been derived (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

4.8.1 Grounded Theory in the Current Study: Procedures and Reflections

The procedures for using grounded theory in the current study followed the synthesis of steps and stages outlined above. Throughout these steps and stages, the software package NUD.IST was used to store, retrieve and manage the data in electronic form. This helped to speed up the processes of analysis by obviating the need for manual 'cutting and pasting' and manipulation of text units as is required by grounded theory development. Beyond this however, all analytical processes (e.g. the actual identification and construction of codes and categories, the drawing of mental maps and the devising of explanations) were undertaken manually. This was in the light of the cautionary remarks of Mason (1996) and Richardson and Richardson (1994) regarding the dangers of 'over-relying' upon computer packages during the crucial, intellectually demanding processes of grounded theory generation. The analytical steps proceeded as follows. First, to 'fracture' the large body of textual data, each transcript was read through carefully, and concept labels attached systematically to pieces of text judged to have a coherent meaning. Following good practice, some of these concept labels were determined in advance with reference to the research questions, whilst other 'in vivo' categories (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996) emerged 'spontaneously' during the process of reading through the transcripts. For example, in the following piece of text, drawn from the transcript of the interview with the Yorkshire baker, ideas relating to the mentality of this producer, his disposition towards his products and his perception of his production processes are all evident:

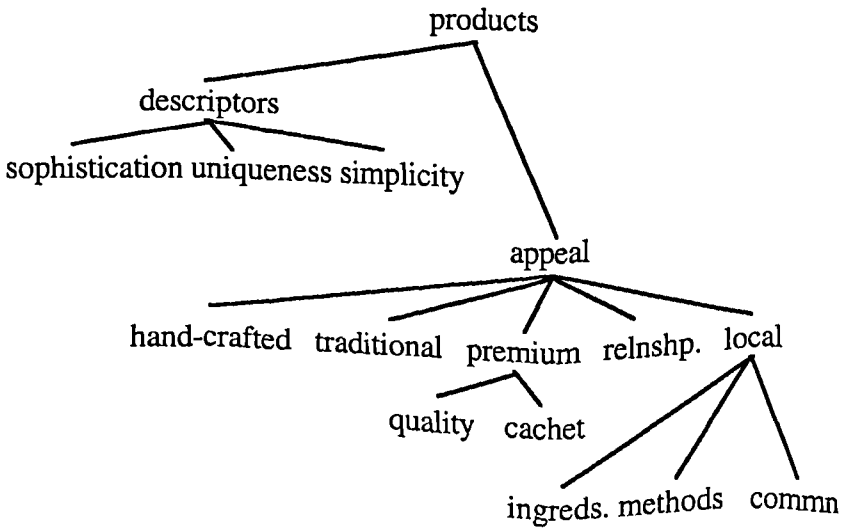
"*We won't mechanise anything where it will take away from the craft aspects of the business, because we want to set ourselves apart from the rest by specialising in quality and making things the way they should be made, in our opinion ... We try to keep our individuality by doing things the way ... I mean, we are proud of our craft. We are craftsmen. We don't believe in splitting a bag, adding water and then mixing it and putting it in the oven. That is not what we are about.*"

As all of the aforementioned ideas were of clear relevance to the research questions, the concept labels 'mentality', 'product descriptor' and 'production process' were all attached to this piece of text, having been identified in advance as likely 'useful' labels. In addition however, the above text piece also conveyed ideas in this interviewee of distinction from larger manufacturers or industrialised producers. Thus, identifying from the text that this notion of distinction, the unanticipated concept label of 'industrial production' was attached, denoting a text piece where an opinion was expressed on industrialised, or non-craft production. This process of coding the data continued until all the transcripts had been read carefully and had concept labels attached to them. In total, this process led to the generation and application of 26 individual concept labels. A full presentation of these concept labels, and an account of their descriptions and properties used for the purpose of this research, is given in Appendix 3.

The next stage in the process, following the literature, involved axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This entailed examination and scrutiny of the concept labels - and the data attached to them - with a view to developing 'higher order' or more abstract categories which could offer a more interpretative or conceptual perspective of the data. In addition, this stage also involved the integration of codes and categories and the testing of ideas about their inter-relationships. In practice, this stage of the process involved the drawing and re-drawing of a number of 'mental maps' (Jones, 1985b) which represented tentative depictions of the way in which codes and categories could be integrated, and the way that these could then be related to one another. Key mental maps were constructed for depicting what interviewees said about (i) their products (including their ideas about product characteristics, appeals to consumers, production processes and influence of territory in their identity) and (ii) themselves (including their perceptions of their mentalities, 'world views', aptitudes, business opinions and decisions). Examples of the most developed versions of these two sets of mental maps, resulting from the previously described processes, are presented in Appendices 4 and 5.

The final stage of the analytical process for the current study involved selective coding. This entailed continued scrutiny of, and reflection upon, the developing categories and the relationships between them, with a view to developing (i) a satisfactory 'picture' of the nature of speciality regional food products and producers, derived from the interviewees' own testimonies; and (ii) a satisfactory *explanation* of the nature of these phenomena. To arrive at both of the above, further use was made of the mental maps developed in the previous stage of analysis. In particular, more specific maps were developed in relation to speciality regional food products and producers, which served to highlight some important contrasts and contradictions in the interviewees' testimonies. Identification of, and reflection upon, these contrasts was crucial to the development of the grounded theory explanations for the current study. Although the full account of these explanations - and their descriptive 'backgrounds' - forms the substance of the two following results Chapters, the analytical process which gave rise to them is described here briefly. First, in relation to building a picture of the nature and characteristics of speciality regional foods, the following mental map was developed from the processes of initial and axial coding (Figure 4.1).

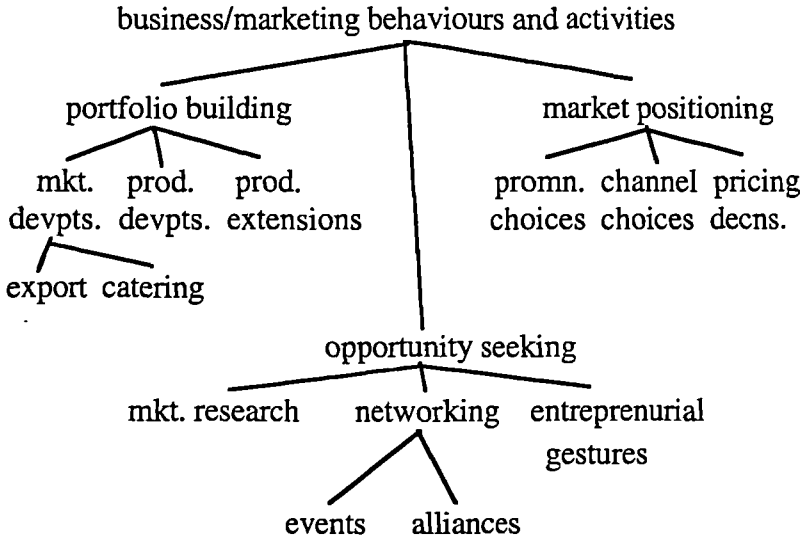
Figure 4.1 Constituent Aspects of Speciality Regional Foods: a Mental Map



From this map, it was identified that interviewees in the current study had very diverse perceptions of the nature and characteristics of speciality regional foods. This was an intriguing finding, and one which required further thought and explanation. It was then through a process of returning to the literature, drawing from theoretical understanding, using the 'paradigmatic model', and undertaking repeated 'testings' of explanations on the raw data that the final satisfactory theory emerged. In this particular case, insights from the social historical literature were useful, by reinforcing the different ways in which foods could become territorially distinctive, and hence, how interviewee perceptions could differ. Such insights became key intellectual and analytical stimuli for the development of the final explanation, given in Chapter 5. Similarly, specific mental maps were developed in relation to interviewees' perceptions of their own mentality and behaviour. Figure 4.2 shows a map of the constituent elements of interviewees' perceptions of their mentality, whilst Figure 4.3 shows a map synthesising evidence of their more entrepreneurial and market-oriented behaviours.

Figure 4.2 Constituent Elements of Interviewees' Perceptions of Mentality

Figure 4.3 Evidence of Interviewees' Entrepreneurial and Market-Oriented Behaviours



As with the map relating to products, these maps served to highlight a diversity of mentalities and behaviours amongst interviewees, most pointedly revealing the co-existence of apparently contrasting behaviours amongst the same producers. This finding was a revelation, confounding key conclusions about producer behaviour derived from many previous studies. Once again, recourse was made to the literature, theoretical understandings, and the Strauss and Corbin (1990) paradigmatic model in an attempt to arrive at an explanation. In this case, two particular insights were crucial: first, Jones' (1985b) recommendations regarding the need for critical reading of interviewee testimonies, and second, the 'context' dimension in Strauss and Corbin's paradigmatic model. The former insight encouraged repeated reading of interviewee testimonies in this study from an increasingly critical perspective: this meant that, rather than taking at face value the interviewees' testimonies regarding their mentalities and behaviour, such testimonies were analysed from the point of view that they were constructed to portray an impression about the speaker, and to therefore have a particular impact on the researcher. This 'added dimension' of critical reading of the testimonies was quite instrumental to the understanding of how contrasting behaviours could apparently co-exist within this small set of producers. The latter insight of 'context' built on the former one by generating a solid reason for the particular self-presentations of the interviewees: that is, the self-presentations could be explained by placing them within the context of the interviewees'

competitive circumstances. A full account of the results and explanations of speciality regional food producer behaviour is given in Chapter 6.

4.9 Verification of Data in the Current Study

Thus far, this Chapter has presented the broad investigational approach, and methods of data collection, sampling and analysis adopted for the current study. In undertaking any qualitative investigation however, an additional key consideration is required which relates to the verification of data and the results derived from them. In particular, qualitative researchers are encouraged to consider the extent to which their data and findings have *validity*: that is, whether they give a true and accurate account of the phenomena to which they pertain. Standard techniques for ensuring validity of results, as discussed by Silverman (1993), include following a 'triangulation' approach in research design (whereby a combination of data collection methods are employed in an attempt to arrive at a 'truer fix' on reality), or undertaking 'respondent validation' (reporting back the results of initial analysis to research subjects or participants, to gain their commentary on how 'true' a representation of reality these are).

Neither of the above approaches was considered a useful means of verifying data and results in the current study. First, in terms of triangulation, it was felt that although supplementing the in-depth interviews with a number of participant observations and/or case studies may have given some interesting insights into how research participants operated 'on the ground', such insights would not serve to *validate* the results on participants' perceptions derived from their interview testimonies (Silverman, 2000). Similarly, respondent validation was considered to be a flawed approach to verification as, again following the arguments of Silverman (2000), there is no reason why the post-hoc reflections of research participants should give any more direct access to the 'truth' of an interview encounter than can be gained through careful scrutiny of the data by the researcher. In practical terms, the limitations of respondent validation had particular resonance for the current study, given the considerable period of time which elapsed

between execution of some of the interviews and completion of a satisfactory level of data analysis. Instead of this approach therefore, the current study concentrated on following rigorous and systematic techniques of data collection and analysis, such as sampling contrary cases and employing constant comparison, to enhance the validity of results.

The methods for the current investigation have now been described. Overall, a qualitative approach has been adopted, employing the specific techniques of in-depth interviewing, theoretical sampling and grounded theory analysis. What follows in the next two Chapters is a report of the outcome or 'end product' of these data collection and analysis processes, first in relation to the research questions surrounding speciality regional food products, and second, in relation to the mentality and behaviour of the producers of these products. Thus, in Chapter 5, a synthesised, descriptive account is given of what interviewees in the current study said in relation to the products that they produce. Following observations of the intriguing contrasts and diversities in these testimonies, the Chapter then proceeds with the explanations, derived from the analytical processes described above, which were developed to account for these contrasts and diversities. Chapter 6 follows an identical pattern, whereby the perceptions of interviewees in relation to their own mentalities and behaviours are first presented in a synthesised, descriptive account. This is then followed by an unveiling of the explanatory theories developed to make sense of the observed 'mentality and behaviour' perceptions. In this way, Chapters 5 and 6 present descriptive results, discussion *and* analysis. However in adopting this form of presentation, it is recognised that only a minimal level of descriptive detail can be conveyed for each individual producer in the 20-strong research sample. With this in mind, the concluding sections in this Chapter present a set of 'mini biographies' of each of the 20 producers in the empirical study. This furnishes background information and detail for each producer, providing the reader with a 'platform' of knowledge and insights to take forward to the reading of the results and analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.10 Biographies of Interviewees in the Research Sample

The following section presents the mini biographies of the speciality regional food producers in the research sample, presented in the same order as Table 4.2 (Profile of Interviewees). The biographies contain brief details of the personal background of the interviewees and the firms they represented, together with information on the approximate size and age of the firms. This information was gathered from three main sources (i) from interviewees' answers to biographical questions in the interviews themselves; (ii) from additional literature on the firm provided by the interviewees; (iii) from newspaper cuttings, magazine features and other press-related material giving information on the interviewees and their firms.

4.10.1 Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire

This interviewee, with her family, presided over a set of linked businesses operating on the 1,500 acre country estate which the family had bought in the 1969 and subsequently developed into the present day enterprise. At the time of interview, these businesses included a trout hatchery and smoking facility, game rearing and dealing, poultry, veal, the delicatessen itself, a gift shop and restaurant, as well as a recent venture into corporate entertainment by way of providing hospitality and facilities for business groups interested in shooting and other outdoor pursuits. The family's background was originally in textiles manufacturing and wholesaling, a strand of business activity which the interviewee's son took charge of and now manages off the estate. Of the various enterprises on the estate itself, 42 people were employed at the time of interview.

4.10.2 Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland

This enterprise consisted of a farm diversification venture begun in the mid-1980s. The interviewee himself presided over a well-established, mixed-system family farm, which included sheep, pigs, laying hens and a pedigree dairy herd. In addition to the dairy and meat products produced on the farm being retailed on-site, the interviewee was also licensed to retail certified Aberdeen Angus beef, and also procured fresh game and fish

from local sources for the shop. The shop itself had the rustic feel of a farm shop rather than a delicatessen, and included a small seated area for the serving of teas and coffees.

4.10.3 Microbrewer, Northumberland

This enterprise comprised a partnership between the interviewee himself and one other director, who effectively acted as marketing manager for the enterprise. Not having come from a brewing background, the interviewee had completed a degree in brewing at Herriot-Watt University before taking jobs in brewing companies in Wiltshire and East Lothian. Together with his partner, using capital raised by himself and his father-in-law, he had bought the current brewing premises in 1994. The site of the brewery was old, dating back to 1777, although no active brewing had taken place there since 1937. At the time of interview, the business employed one or two staff besides the interviewee and his partner, producing to a maximum of 50 barrels of cask conditioned ale a week, in a range of six types. As such, this business was very much at the smaller end of the microbrewing 'scale', and squarely constituted a microbusiness.

4.10.4 Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria

This enterprise was one of five long-established, small family firms in the sample whose present managers were third or fourth generation descendants of the original proprietor. This firm was established in 1875, first as a bottling operation for lemonade and soft drinks, being bought by the interviewee's grandfather in 1913. In the pre- and post-war years, the firm focused on beer bottling for its main business (especially Guinness, stout, cider, McEwan's Export and Bass Pale Ale), moving subsequently into soft drinks, cordials and fizzy pop (e.g. dandelion and burdock, cream soda) as the bottled domestic beer market declined. In 1989, the firm began bottling spring water following a chance inquiry from a local landowner with a natural spring on his premises: from these humble beginnings, spring water comprised 80-90% of the total earnings of the firm at the time of interview. Aside from the interviewee and his brother, who were partner proprietors of the business, the firm employed 10 people.

4.10.5 Cheesemaker, Cumbria

This interviewee hailed from a comfortable farming background and trained initially as a photographer before starting cheese-making in the mid-1970s, from home, as a means of using up spare capacity of milk from her herd of goats. The business developed from there and in 1995, she bought the current premises which comprised a cheese-making room, a store-room and a shop. A range of cheeses were produced, some from goats' milk sourced from the interviewee's sister's herd and some from cows' milk being sourced from local farmers. At the time of interview, the business produced 30 tonnes of cheese a year in total and consisted of a partnership between the interviewee, her sister and her daughter, with a couple of part-time workers being employed.

4.10.6 Meat Processor 1, Cumbria

This firm comprised a partnership of agents who oversaw and co-ordinated the sourcing, processing and distribution of specialist and rare breed meats. Five people were involved in total, providing whole sides, boned out primaries, boxed meat and burgers for caterers and local butchers. At the time of interview, the partnership was also investigating the possibilities of mail order direct to the end consumer. The interviewee himself came from a farming background and acted as a judge for cattle breeds at country show level.

4.10.7 Baker, Yorkshire

Started in 1865, this firm was being run by the same family of the original proprietress, based in the premises she had built 130 years ago in a small coastal town in North Yorkshire. A very wide range of breads, cakes, pies and pastries, some based on the recipes of the original proprietress, were retailed both from the on-site shop as well as through national chains of wholesalers and retailers. The firm also exported regularly through wholesalers and via mail order. A Victorian style tearoom was also based on-site. At the time of interview, the managing director presided over approximately 80 employees, making the firm one of the largest in the sample.

4.10.8 Cheesemaker 1, Yorkshire

This firm was one of only two cheese-making businesses in the sample to be more than one generation old. Following ancient monastic and subsequently domestic traditions of cheese-making in the area, the present creamery was founded in the 1930s and managed by Dairy Crest until 1992, when the decision was taken to shut the creamery down and transfer production of the cheese to another region. This had the effect of stimulating a strident management buy-out, as local people rallied round to support the enterprise and retain the cheese-making practice. Since then, the creamery has expanded the product line immensely, from one standardised product to a range of maturations, milk types and fruit and herb additions. An elaborate and extensive visitor centre, shop and restaurant on-site complement the national and international distribution of the cheeses through independent and multiple outlets. Producing 1200 tons of cheese a year and employing upwards of 50 people, this firm was one of the larger ones in the sample. The person interviewed was the production manager for the firm.

4.10.9 Confectioner, Yorkshire

This interviewee's background was in the grocery trade. In 1996 he was approached by the managing director of an old-established confectionery company whose product had originally been developed in 1840 as a palatable sweet for Victorian ladies to take after drinking the spa waters of the local Yorkshire town. Although the product had enjoyed a prestigious status and renown across Europe in the late 19th century, successive owners had dwindled production, such that by 1996 the managing director was looking to close the company down completely. The interviewee, together with his son, chose to buy the firm as a going concern. Initially they retailed the product through the interviewee's chocolate shop based in the town concerned. However the popularity of the product was such that national distribution through multiple and independent outlets, as well as exporting to Europe, North America and South East Asia were being carried out at the time of interview. The interviewee foresaw further development opportunities in the future.

4.10.10 Fresh Produce Processor, Northumberland

From a farming background originally, this interviewee had started soft fruit growing and fresh produce wholesaling for a supermarket multiple before setting up with a partner, in 1994, a company making and retailing fresh soups. A range of twelve soups had been developed and were marketed through independent outlets and also via the catering trade. At the time of interview, the interviewee was managing director of this independent company. Subsequently however, the company has been bought by a US-based franchise operation.

4.10.11 Shrimp Picker, Lancashire

This interviewee originally trained as an agricultural engineer and had been involved in contract work as well as self-employment for many years. His interest in shrimping stemmed from his father who taught him how to do it. However the activity also provided an important source of seasonal income in addition to engineering work. This interviewee was therefore very much a 'one man band', shrimping during the season from his own wagon, and bringing the catch home for washing and cleaning, with his wife taking charge of shelling, cooking and potting activities from a purpose-built portakabin situated in the back garden behind their house. At the time of interview, the average volume of production was estimated to be fifty dozen pots a week, with many being distributed locally, though a proportion being sold further afield through agents.

4.10.12 Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire

This firm comprised a husband and wife team who had set up the enterprise in the early 1990s with the aim of reviving production of the local dale's cheese. Although neither partner had any experience in cheese-making, the husband had experience in working in food processing and catering. The precise stimulus to set up the firm came from the husband's redundancy and the urgent need to provide income to support himself, his wife and their new baby. From very basic beginnings producing the cheese in their home kitchen, the interviewee and her husband had acquired a unit in an industrial estate in the

local town, in which all production was now based. In addition to the original cheese, the firm also produced matured and fruit and herb versions as well as a sheep's cheese variety. Both the original cows' and sheep's milk cheeses were designated with PDO status. One or two other workers were employed part-time, making this enterprise one of the confirmed microbusinesses of the sample.

4.10.13 Cheesemaker, Lancashire

This family run enterprise had been set up in the 1920s by the great grandfather of the present managing director. Through the pre- and immediately post-war years, the firm remained very small, but grew significantly when ownership passed to the present managing director's father. In this period, production efficiencies combined with shrewd deals struck with the Milk Marketing Board sustained the firm at a time when many independent cheese-makers went out of business. The present managing director took over the firm in the early 1990s, expanding into export markets (which accounted for 25% of total turnover at the time of interview) and supplying major UK supermarket chains for the first time. The product range had also been expanded to encompass an assortment of pre-pack and traditional varieties, including a definitively traditional local cheese whose production had been revitalised recently, and for which PDO status had been successfully sought. At the time of interview, the firm had a turnover of £8m and employed 77 people, making it one of the largest enterprises in the sample.

4.10.14 Cheesemaker, Northumberland

Originally from an upland sheep-farming background, this interviewee had begun cheese-making as a diversification venture in 1984, on the basis of perceiving that little future existed in traditional agriculture. Having successfully set up an enterprise on his original farm premises, he later moved to his present location in converted farm buildings leased on the estate of a local peer. Here, a shop, tearoom and viewing gallery had been constructed next to the dairy, giving visitors the opportunity to observe the cheese-making process whilst sampling the output. In addition to on-site sales, the interviewee

distributed to regional outlets and also engaged in some supermarket sales. At the time of interview, the firm was a microbusiness.

4.10.15 Fish Smoker, Northumberland

This enterprise was another well-established family firm, the interviewee being the fourth generation manager of the business which had been set up in 1906 by the great grandfather of the family. Originally the firm had been one of many small smoking enterprises existing on the north east coast, supplying products for the London markets. By the end of the 20th century however this firm found itself to be one of the very few small enterprises left, with the increased industrialisation and up-scaling of fish smoking and the imposition of fishing quotas in the 1980s causing many similar enterprises to go out of business. In addition to smoking different varieties of fish - all with the use of craft methods - which were distributed locally, nationally and occasionally for export, the firm also possessed an on-site retail premises offering a comprehensive range of fresh, frozen and preserved fish and seafood products. The interviewee himself had worked in some larger smokehouses before taking directorship of the firm from his uncle. At the time of interview, 10-15 people were employed.

4.10.16 Bee-Keeper, Northumberland

Set up in the 1960s, this enterprise comprised a farm of approximately 1200 colonies of bees located in out-apiaries throughout the north of the county and border country. Managed by a husband and wife team, the business involved the collection of honey, wax and propolis from the bees to make a wide range of products including cosmetics, candles and cleaning items as well as a variety of honeys. In addition to distribution of products to independent outlets on a regional basis, the enterprise also comprised an on-site retail outlet and exhibition area which incorporated an imaginative and informative set of displays on bees and bee-keeping for the benefit of visitors. At the time of interview approximately 10-12 people were employed in the enterprise, many of whom were seasonal or part-time workers.

4.10.17 Shrimp Picker, Cumbria

Born and brought up locally within an extended family of commercial fishermen, this interviewee had enjoyed a long association and experience with shrimp picking and processing. Having worked initially in two local agricultural businesses, he then took a market stall in the main town in the area: whilst he caught the shrimps his wife manned the stall and together they also distributed the catch to local hotels and restaurants. As the hotel and catering trade grew, this led to the decision in 1983 to buy the current premises, which involved a processing area and store for fish and game products. In addition, the interviewee continued as a sideline to pick shrimps for other processors to pot. At the time of interview however, the enterprise was experiencing a decline in the hotel trade; thus the interviewee had begun to pot his own shrimps on a commercial scale, investing in dedicated shrimp washing and cleaning machinery in order to secure a supply contract with a national supermarket chain. The enterprise employed approximately 10 people.

4.10.18 Microbrewer, Yorkshire

This interviewee had an unusual and colourful background, being from a long-established, well-known family of brewers with a national presence, rising to the position of chief executive within the family firm. Following a hostile takeover from a larger brewing company however, the interviewee had left the firm and, after some deliberation, had decided to set up a new independent brewery from scratch in 1992. Being intentionally set up from the start to incorporate visitors, the enterprise involved a visitor centre, shop and large cafe bar area in addition to the brewhouse itself. A range of three bottled ales were distributed nationally, including through supermarket outlets, in addition to the distribution of cask ales for the on-trade. Somewhat unusually, the firm was run as a plc, with 700 shareholders. At the time of interview, the firm produced 500 barrels of beer a week, making the firm a 'halfway house' between a confirmed microbrewery (judged by the interviewee as a firm which produces less than 100 barrels per week) and a regional brewer (producing over 1000 barrels).

4.10.19 Baker, Cumbria

This interviewee also came from an unusual background but, unlike the previous interviewee, had had no experience in the baking trade prior to setting up his firm. Originally trained in Russian linguistics and employed as a BBC correspondent, the interviewee gave this up in the 1970s in search of a different, more self-sufficient lifestyle. He moved to Cumbria and started baking bread in 1976, producing and marketing it from scratch in his own home. The business gradually expanded until by the mid-1980s it was beginning to outgrow the original premises. The current premises - a wood-fired bakery, shop and tearoom - were constructed and opened in 1991. In addition to on-site sales, the bakery also supplies specialist and independent outlets nationally, and selected products have also been distributed through one supermarket chain. At the time of interview, the business was being run as an independent enterprise, owned and managed by the interviewee. Subsequently however, the business has been bought by larger investors.

4.10.20 Meat Processor 2, Cumbria

This last interviewee owned and managed an enterprise falling into the 'old-established family firm' category, this interviewee being the seventh generation family member to take up the reins of the business. Founded in 1828 as a grocery shop, the family soon began selling the meat they processed and cured from their own herd of pigs. By W.W.II the reputation of their meat products had grown such that they were distributing nationally to specialist outlets. The interviewee took over the running of the business in the 1950s, stepping up production and marketing in the face of a declining local grocery trade in the 1960s. At the time of interview, the firm produced a range of sausage, bacon and ham products, all produced from the family's closed herd of pigs. Distribution was conducted on a national basis, though to date this did not involve any supermarket outlets. An on-site shop, still based on the original premises also retailed the products.

4.11 Summary

This Chapter has set out the investigational approach and research methods used to conduct the empirical component of the current study. Given the nature of the research questions and the complex meanings relating to the phenomena under investigation, a qualitative research approach has been adopted. Within this broad approach, appropriate methods of data collection, sampling and analysis were selected, specifically: in-depth interviewing, theoretical sampling and grounded theory analysis. Following the tenets of best practice for executing these methods, and taking account of the practical time and resource limitations facing the investigation, the empirical study constituted a series of in-depth interviews with 20 regional speciality food producers in the north of England. Each interview, lasting from 1-3 hours, was tape-recorded and then fully transcribed for analysis. Then, following the broad analytical steps and stages proposed within grounded theory, a system of codes and categories was developed to break down and make sense of the large body of textual data. The computer software package NUD.IST was employed to facilitate this process. Further stages of scrutiny, reflection and development of these codes and categories proceeded, followed by the drawing of mental maps and other dynamic, diagrammatic representations of the data. Final stages of checking and verification of the developing theories with the raw data led to the final explanations of (i) the nature of speciality regional foods and (ii) the mentality and behaviour of the producers of these foods. Full accounts of these results and explanations are given in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, the reading of which is bolstered by the mini-biographies of the 20 interviewees given in the concluding sections of this Chapter.

Chapter 5: Conceptualisations of Speciality Regional Food Products: Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Having outlined in Chapter 4 the methods employed to collect and analyse the data for the primary research component of this investigation, as well as introducing the 20 speciality regional food producers concerned, this Chapter goes on to give the results of the primary research with respect to speciality regional food products. That is, the Chapter presents and analyses producer conceptualisations of speciality regional foods by reporting and discussing what the interviewees said about the provenance, nature and attributes of their products. It may be recalled from Chapter 2 that much uncertainty surrounds the notion of what a speciality regional food is, given the varied impacts of macro-environmental forces and social history, not to mention the added complexities which arise from the perspective of speciality regional foods as marketable entities. In particular, two key areas of uncertainty emerged: the manner in which territorial distinctiveness is bestowed on foods, and second, the nature of the end qualities of speciality regional food products. This Chapter addresses these areas of uncertainty by proceeding as follows. First, interviewee perceptions of the territorial distinctiveness of their products are presented, giving evidence on what was said with respect to geophysical and human facets of territorial distinctiveness, as well as evidence relating to the marketing perspective of typicity. A discussion section then presents further analysis of these views and proposes explanations for the apparent contrasts in interviewees' perceptions. Then interviewee conceptualisations of end products are presented, giving evidence of how the core appeals of the products were perceived, for example, with respect to rusticity, naturalness or tradition. Anomalies in these perceptions are then analysed further, with a view to explaining their existence. In both sets of discussion presented in this Chapter, the explanations given have been developed using the grounded theory procedures set out in Chapter 4.

5.2 Producer Perceptions of Territorial Distinctiveness in their Products

A first key area of interest was to investigate whether the interviewees felt their products possessed territorial distinctiveness in some way, and if so, in what manner this distinctiveness presented itself. To encourage the most spontaneous discussion of this key issue, interviewees were not, in the main, questioned directly on this matter: rather, in the course of describing the history of the firm or the process involved in producing products, the issue of territorial distinctiveness tended to emerge of its own accord, and the interviewee would then be encouraged to elaborate further on this matter. Overall, the perceptions tended to vary widely across interviewees, with some directly opposing views being expressed. The perceptions are presented here in a synthesised form, under the headings of geophysical, human and imagined facets of territorial distinctiveness.

5.2.1 Producer Perceptions of Geophysical Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness

It may be recalled from Chapter 2 that one key facet of territorial distinctiveness in foods is that of the geophysical environment, with some authors presenting evidence to suggest that factors such as the climate, topography, geology or soil composition of a local area may influence the organoleptic or essential qualities of the food products derived from that area (e.g. Bérard and Marchenay, 1995; Bettencourt *et al*, 1998). Some interviewees conveyed their own convictions with respect to this facet, indicating their belief that the local geophysical environment did impart special characteristics on their end products. This was demonstrated, for example, in the views of two cheesemakers, who perceived that the flavour of locally sourced milk was influenced by the natural foraging environment of the cows:

"I mean, everybody says 'oh [different dales'] milk must be the same', but it's not. It is all to do with the different grasses and minerals in the grass. I mean [this dale] is known for its lead mines and there are different minerals in the grasses [in this dale], and heathers and things like that, so they all go to make the milk completely different to that of [the next dale]. And then if you go up the different dales, the higher up you go, the less

grass you get and the more heather you get, so it changes the flavour of the milk. It must do, for the cows to be eating different types of forage."

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

"*... the milk is very important, because the area we are in is important, and obviously with the fauna up here, the type of grassland up here is very different from down south, so that's got to have an impact. We say 'we are what we eat', well the cow is what it eats. You are going to have different flavours.*"

(Cheesemaker 1, Yorkshire)

Such views were not confined to cheesemakers: a Cumbrian based meat processor for example, conveyed the notion that the flavour of his lamb was also influenced by the natural flora of the local area, to the extent that it would become a different product if it was reared elsewhere. This was an interesting view given that, for commercial reasons, this processor was contemplating moving operations out of the locality, as the following exchange illustrates:

Q: If you see yourself moving more over to the north east, would you see yourself [sourcing the lamb] from there?

"*No, no. It would be important that we still procure our stock from the Lakes. Part of the flavour of the meat is the feeding and they feed on the heather and the blaeberries and all that sort of thing and it infuses the meat with a flavour.*"

(Meat Processor 1, Cumbria)

Thus it was felt that the special characteristics bestowed by the geophysical environment were essential to the nature of the end product, and should not be removed. The impact of the geophysical environment on end product qualities was also conveyed in relation to fish products, as the views of the two shrimp pickers in the sample revealed. For example, one spoke of how the topography of different estuaries gave rise to variations in

the size of the commonly available shrimps which could be caught using appropriate methods:

"In Southport there's about four or five that go out with tractors, go for the Southport shrimps ... but they're a bigger shrimp than what we get up here."

Q: Oh so there are differences?

"Yes, there's is like a Silloth shrimp if you will, although they're in shallow waters. Their sand is flat down there, for miles and miles ... our sand you go along and then all of a sudden you go down the dyke. That where we catch the shrimp. You can't get behind the tractor too much. But they can go for miles flat, driving the tractor .... But further up [Morecambe] Bay you can't, you get little gullies."

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

Thus it may be observed that interviewees from different product sectors conveyed the notion that the geophysical environment does have an impact on the characteristics of end products, to the extent that they perceived their products to be territorially distinctive. At the same time however, other producers gave opposing views regarding the influence of geophysical factors on product attributes. For example, the second meat processor in the sample displayed some scepticism regarding the need for specific climatic conditions in order to produce air-dried ham, conditions which other producers were perceived to set great store by:

"the Italians make great play, and so do the Spanish, of the climate. I think it probably does have a part to play, but I think that sometimes it is possibly overstated, the case for a particularly dry climate... But in my opinion [the product] could [be produced anywhere in Britain], yes. I think if anybody producing the stuff achieves reasonable conditions, I think that the external climate doesn't really have ... obviously if it is in an area where it is going to rain every day that might cause a bit of a problem, but even so that could be overcome artificially, so yes, in my opinion it could be."

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

In the case of the bee-keeper meanwhile, scepticism about the influence of geophysical factors was expressed slightly differently. Although it was felt that the basic presence of bees in an area was related to rainfall levels, this producer perceived that there simply wasn't sufficient geographic diversity in the natural environment in the UK to result in territorial differences in the final flavour and form attributes of honey:

Q: Is [bee-keeping] something that would have been found all over England...?
"*Oh yes, everywhere. Aberdeenshire - colossal, all up the east coast, Yorkshire - colossal. Whole of the south of England, all the West Country. Not so much up the Lake District, as soon as the rainfall gets up to about 40 inches the bee-keeping start to decline. The bees don't go along with too high a rainfall. It is warmer over there but they don't seem to like the rainfall..... But honey is much the same all over, heather honey is the same, all over the country. I have had honey from Devon which was quite nice. And we have some honey that's come from the hills, that's nice. But it is the same, the flora doesn't change much over this country.*"

(Bee-keeper, Northumberland)

The notion that the geophysical environment does not impart special flavour qualities was also conveyed, in a more forthright fashion by a cheesemaker:

Q: Some people have said the milk adds to the character of the cheese...?
"*I would dispute that, you can listen to people at [previously mentioned Yorkshire creamery] going on about flowers and herbs ... I think it's a complete load of twaddle myself. You do get differences of milk between breeds of cow, and you do get seasonal differences ... more to do with quality of the grass, and the oils in the grass, what have you ... you can produce softer or harder fats or different protein fat ratios. The flavour from the herbs and things ... it's twaddle! I could buy milk from Liverpool or wherever, and make just the same cheese. Yes.*"

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

This producer therefore refuted the notion that the natural environment has a direct impact on the flavour characteristics of the end product, in this case, that the forage of cows imparts a special flavour to milk, although there is an acknowledgement that the chemical composition of the cheese may vary with the type of milk. The above view was supported by another cheesemaker in the sample, who asserted that factors such as seasonal variations in forage types, not necessarily related to territory, have a very significant influence on the end product attributes of cheese:

Q: So you find [the milk] changes over the seasons as well?

"*Yes, very much on what the animal's eating, it reflects very much these things. The main changeover from silage to grass and from grass back to silage which is in autumn when the cows go in and they're completely on silage... But the more drastic change is when they go back out to grass ... because the cow's stomach, having taken silage which tends to be quite an acid feed, their whole stomach's got to rebalance to what they are eating you see ... also the grass is far higher in moisture than silage is, so the whole balance of the stomach has to change, so naturally the milk is completely different.*"

(Cheesemaker, Cumbria)

A further way in which the geophysical environment was perceived to have a relatively minor influence on the essential characteristics of food products was through the application of modern technologies in food production. These were seen to enable the creation of artificially suitable environments or raw materials in areas where the natural environments and materials were not conducive to the production of certain foods. The view of the second meat processor above, in relation to the creation of artificial surroundings for the production of air-dried ham alludes to this, and it is also illustrated by the following producer's perceptions of regional differences in beer:

"*In days gone by, I think it probably did relate quite directly to where the breweries were situated. If you go back 150 years or so, you had a situation where Burton on Trent, as a*

major brewing centre, had very hard water - a water suitable for producing pale ales and bitter beers, the classic sort of India Pale Ale type of beers that the Burton brewers were famous for. And they happened to have a good, copious water supply that dictated the style of beer they produced. The converse was true in London, where you had a softer water and where they were great on porter or stout and the darker, sweeter beers. Now that was geographical location dictating the style of beer. These days, chemistry has moved on, and we can create anything out of anything basically, so geographical location is not a factor any longer."

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

Thus, this producer conveys the notion that the influence of the geophysical environment on food products may have had prominence in previous eras, but with present day technologies, this influence is being moderated or even erased. Overall, several producer views have been presented which appear to cast doubt on the extent to which geophysical facets of typicity may be found in speciality regional food products. However there is one final theme which emerged in the course of the discussions which appears to raise further questions about the geophysical dimensions of these foods: that is, the decisions regarding the actual procurement of raw materials by the producers in this sample. Crucially, for some producers, key product ingredients or materials were reported to be procured from national or even international sources, rather than from the direct locality. Reasons for this were varied. On the one hand, some producers reported that, whilst they were keen to source from the local area, suitable raw materials were sometimes simply not available, particularly where a diverse product line was in operation, or where seasonal variations in supply had to be overcome:

"All our flour comes from Goole, near Hull. The best flour millers in the country as far as we're concerned. They are in Yorkshire Pantry as well, so that's local. A lot of the wheat is obviously grown locally, we get a lot of locally grown wheat. However, a lot of Canadian wheat has to be bought in to supplement it, because we grow the wrong sorts

of flour here for bread. It's mainly used for biscuits and things like that, but we will put a stronger Canadian wheat in, to mix with the local flour."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

"We are driven by the variety [of hops - Fuggles and Goldings] rather than the region they come from, and therefore - depending on the season - we buy three quarters of our requirement of hops from the UK, and they are grown in the 'hoppy' counties: Kent, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Sussex are the four main areas. Can't go further north than that because of climate. So we get about three quarters of our requirement, through merchants, from growers in those counties. As to the other quarter, we are buying the same varieties, but probably from North America where they are also grown. Either British Columbia or Oregon."

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

Thus for these producers, the decision to source outside of the locality was motivated by a basic need to gain access to product ingredients which the surrounding natural environment did not provide. Interestingly, this was also the case for the two Yorkshire cheesemakers, who, in spite of their views regarding the importance of the geophysical environment on the cows' milk used for their cheeses, sourced outside of the locality when it came to milk for their sheeps' cheeses, because of the need to achieve sufficient volume. On the other hand however, there were producers who sourced raw materials widely not just because of local availability problems, but also because the non-local suppliers were perceived to offer better quality materials and/or good commercial deals. For example, in the case of the fish smoker, a legacy of over-fishing in the immediate area meant that local supply was hard to come by. In addition, the fish which he now sourced from Iceland was perceived to meet better quality specifications anyway:

"But the herring that we get from Iceland, we were quite lucky, this is the third year that we have been buying from them now and they actually grade them into size for us. We

specify the oil content, because the oil content is important for producing a kipper. You want a good juicy, plump herring. We specify what we want, and they'll freeze us the quantity that we require, say 100 ton, for the year. Then they'll freeze them all down and transport them over here. It is the only way that we can rely on getting herring now. We can't just say, 'oh there's a boat out there, he might catch some'. There's just no chance of that at all."

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

The soft drinks bottler conveyed a similar sense of commitment to procurement of quality ingredients when discussing his choice of fruit essence supplier for his locally sourced spring water:

"*The flavourings are natural fruit essences. Obviously we buy those, but they are genuine fruit extracts rather than flavour. They come from Germany. The best fruit essence manufacturers in the world are in Germany, and it's a company called Dola.*"

Q: What makes them so good?

"*I don't honestly know, but everyone you speak to, as soon as you mention Dola, they say, well fine, if that's your source, no questions. Somebody advised us to go to Dola, which we did... so we are using the best. We use the best water and the best essences.*"

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

Thus for both the fish smoker and the bottler, the best ingredients were not necessarily those available locally. For other producers, similar problems and concerns were found to be influencing decisions regarding the sourcing of packaging materials. Although such materials clearly do not influence the flavour attributes of the foods themselves, in the case of one confectionery product the producer himself recognised that the tin packaging was an essential attribute contributing to the confection's distinct identity. His decision to source packaging outside of the UK was conveyed therefore in a manner suggesting it was an unwilling, but necessary step:

"We are just looking at Korean manufacturers now to make the tins for us, at the moment they are made in England, but they are not competitively priced. We got a fax just yesterday through [our export agency] - they source all their tins in Korea and we will be doing the same. We would rather buy English tins, but the English manufacturers are not competitive on price and they are diabolical on the service they give us, they really are. We are waiting for some at the moment and the delivery has been put back twice. Now this just doesn't happen with the Korean people. You order the stuff and they say it'll arrive next March and it arrives next March and that's the end of it."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

What these accounts of procurement decisions indicate is that in practice, some speciality regional food producers must feel that the special characteristics of their products are derived from factors other than local geophysical ones. To express this another way, if these producers felt that the end attributes of their products depended greatly on the inclusion of locally sourced ingredients, it may be expected that different procurement strategies would be employed, namely, ones which emphasise more the sourcing of locally available materials. Clearly, if such products are believed to have any territorial distinctiveness by the producers, then other factors must be perceived to have an influence. The Chapter goes on now to present views of the sample relating to human facets of typicity.

5.2.2 Producer Perceptions of Human Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness

As highlighted in Chapter 2, another way in which territorial distinctiveness may be bestowed on foods is through human influences: that is, the techniques and methods used by communities in certain areas to produce and process foods, which over the course of time become traditional or customary to those areas. As with geophysical facets of typicity, interviewees were not questioned directly about the extent to which the special characteristics of food products were perceived to be derived from customary skills: in fact, views were spontaneously forthcoming in relation to these matters as the

interviewees described in detail the background to, and subtleties of, their production processes. Sorting through these views, it was found that overall, many producers reported employing distinctive production skills and practices which they perceived to be unique to their local areas, and which were also perceived to bestow territorially distinctive attributes on their end products. In some cases, human factors had their influence through the following of certain recipes:

"*...[our products are made] with a traditional seasoning, the same sort of seasoning that most farmers have or probably had in those days.*"

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

"*... everybody uses their own recipe, ours has gone on and on through the generations. It has been passed down.*"

Q: How individual is the potting?

"*People pot them different ways, with different spices. But we believe we've got the best ones!*"

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

In the case of one cheesemaker, the faithful following of the 'correct' traditional methods was perceived to be so important to the end attributes of the cheese, that a local expert was used to verify that the methods employed by the cheesemaker were indeed leading to an authentic product:

Q: You wouldn't want to have a 'hard' version of [your cheese] then?

"*No, because then that wouldn't be [name of cheese]. We were taught how to make [name of cheese] by someone who lived up the dale for 80 years, and who was brought up in [name of dale]. She told us what it tasted like and how it should be. Every now and then we still take the cheese up to her and ask her is this alright, and she will say yes, but it is getting too hard in places, don't press it so long. Or something like that. She's a*

good critic. Or she'll say, that is disgusting! She's good that way. If we were to press the cheese too hard, it would not be [name of cheese].... Even if we tried to change from having one that high, to a taller one or a thinner one, it wouldn't be [name of cheese]. It has to be that certain diameter, certain height, certain texture and certain flavour."

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

Thus for this producer, the following of carefully defined, traditional methods was perceived to be crucial in order to achieve an identifiable end product with territorially discrete attributes. Whilst the above examples illustrate the notion of typicity being bestowed through the use of special recipes or methods, in other cases, human factors had their influence through the employment of certain distinctive equipment:

"*We have done a number of things to ensure that our beers are completely different. I mean, the fermenters that I am talking about are a particular style of fermenter called Yorkshire Squares, they are a sort of double decker arrangement. And again, if you used them properly, then they impart to the beer certain quite distinctive qualities, you tend to get quite a harsh, bitter beer but full and smooth in the palate as well, And that is how Yorkshire beers always used to be. I mean, there was a time when you had your first pint of Tetley's and you wondered how anybody drank it because it was really quite astringent and bitter, quite heavily hopped.*"

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

Thus for this producer, the decision to use old-fashioned brewhouse equipment which was traditional and quite peculiar to the local area, was what helped to make the end products distinctive. Overall therefore, it may be seen that a variety of producers in different product sectors reported using distinctive and traditional methods in their production processes, which were perceived to result in distinctive end products. As with perceptions regarding the influence of geophysical influences on products however, there was also some evidence in the views of the producers in this sample to refute the

significance of human factors of territorial distinctiveness in foods. One way in which this was conveyed was through the assertion by many interviewees that the products in their sectors were really very simple and basic in composition and manufacture, to the extent that there was perceived to be little opportunity for any appreciable diversity in methods of production from one area to the next. This point was made by two cheesemakers during their discussions of cheesemaking production processes:

"*All cheese is made exactly the same, you get your milk, you add some rennet, you add some enzymes, you clot it.*"

Q: I'm sure it's not as easy as that!

"*No, it is actually. Then you get curds and whey. And all cheese is made that way, whether in automated factories or little manufacturers.*"

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

"*If you study cheese-making recipes, there are only basically four or five fundamental recipes in the world. All the rest are derivatives. If you read Scott and you go and look at the recipes, you will find that they are not that dissimilar, a lot of them.... Again, look at the English territorials, they are not vastly different, are they?*"

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

Although it is important to point out that cheesemaking was also described in quite technical, scientific terms at other points in the interviews, these excerpts convey the notion of cheese-making as a very basic, simple process with little opportunity for meaningful geographic differentiation of human inputs, in the form of particular recipes or methods. The notion of methods of speciality regional food production being essentially similar across broad areas was also conveyed by a farm shop owner, in relation to his home-produced meat and dairy products:

"No, we don't go out to be 'Northumberland', more and more traditional, because there are quite a lot of tastes ... Throughout the north, a lot of the recipes are basically the same. Of course, one might put a few more herbs in, a steak and kidney pie will be handed down from mother to daughter ... but basically there is traditional farm produce, and there might be slight variations, but it is basically the same."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

Thus for this producer, the distinctiveness of the products was couched in terms of their issue from a particular system of production on the farm, rather than from being territorially distinctive. Another interviewee, a baker, also conveyed the notion of basic simplicity of production processes in his sector, whilst also alluding to the notion that the main differences between products were often the territorially associated names attached to them by local populations:

"People think of bara brith as being very definitely ... alright it is a fruited loaf just like a plum bread, or just like a brack or whatever, but bara brith is a Welsh style fruited loaf. A clootie dumpling or a Selkirk bannock, again, the recipes are very similar but that is thought of obviously ... well you call it Selkirk bannock, you can't say any more than that, can you!"

(Baker, Yorkshire)

What all the above excerpts highlight is that for some products, the territorial distinctiveness with which they may be associated may not actually come from any meaningful differences in production methods or other human inputs. In addition to the notion of speciality regional food production as basic and simple however, a further set of views offered evidence to question the notion that territorial distinctiveness is bestowed on food products through human facets. For human factors to have an influence, the implication is that the methods employed by present day producers are, in the main, faithful to the local customs and traditions of production passed on through the

generations. Certainly, the employment of traditional brewhouse equipment by the microbrewer mentioned earlier, and the considerable efforts of the Yorkshire cheesemaker to have production methods validated by an expert in tradition, demonstrate that human facets of typicity do 'live on' in some cases. At the same time however, many producers reported making personal adaptations to traditional recipes, and tinkering and tweaking with production methods over time in order to achieve the perceived 'best' product, in given circumstances. This is illustrated by the following assertions of two cheesemakers, both of whom are first generation cheesemakers in their area:

Q: Where do you get your recipes from?

"*Well from reading ... they're very much sort of adapted recipes, and they're designed to suit the facilities that I have ... bearing in mind I started off in the basement of my home, so I was very limited as to what sort of facilities I had, so I was really geared to making the cheese like [name of cheese] which is what I would call a very traditional English-type cheese, it isn't cheddar, it's the sort of cheese that will store well and has a huge latitude as to when it can be eaten ... so, you know, it doesn't have to be eaten at a certain age.*"

(Cheesemaker, Cumbria)

Q: Do the recipes for your cheese fall into any particular historical provenance?

"*No, I can't claim that. I would like to believe that I have created what would be nearest to a logical, common sense approach to making cheese.*"

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

In both these cases therefore, the production methods for cheesemaking were borne out of practical considerations primarily, even if local traditional recipes did provide some inspiration. A further illustration of individual producers 'tinkering' was provided by a microbrewer, who, in asserting that his recipes were developed in a practical and market-responsive fashion, acknowledged that his end products were likely to be very different from those historically found in the area:

Q: Would you describe your products as 'local'?

"It's very difficult to know. If you are talking about this as a local brew which reflects the local tastes and flavours and people then I would say probably it will be to some extent, in as much as the recipes have all been tweaked. You start off with a base recipe then you take on board the feedback from people and start to tweak it.... So you do tweak your recipes, and in that respect it does reflect the local taste, but as for 'yea bygone days', 'this is the sort of beer they were drinking here back in 1750', then no, it would be a very different style of beer, far greater hopped."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

Thus what all the above excerpts illustrate is that although in many cases human impacts such as recipes and production methods were perceived to bestow territorially distinctive attributes on their products, in some instances the sheer simplicity of the production processes, or the ad-hoc adjustments to techniques by individual producers, seem to militate against the notion of territorially distinctive food production 'traditions' being developed and sustained over time. As with geophysical facets of typicity therefore, there seems to be evidence in the views of the producers in this sample to both confirm and refute the existence of territorial distinctiveness in foods through human influences. The results are inconclusive therefore. However, before going on to examine these contrasts further, there is one final facet of territorial distinctiveness in foods which needs to be reported: that of projected or imagined facets.

5.2.3 Producer Perceptions of Projected or Imagined Facets of Territorial Distinctiveness

In Chapter 2, it was proposed that to contemplate the territorial distinctiveness of a food, one may consider its derivation: that is, what it is made of (the geophysical influences) and how it is made (the human influences). In addition to these however, it was argued that as food products are marketable goods, their level of territorial distinctiveness may be validly determined by contemplating the extent to which typicity is *perceived* in the

product by important external agents (e.g. retailers or consumers). Territorial distinctiveness, rather than being an attribute derived from the environment and history, becomes an intangible quality projected onto the food by others, an imagined construct which represents how others perceive and interpret the meaning of a product. It was not anticipated that the interviewees in this sample would contemplate directly this dimension of territorial distinctiveness in their products, yet over the course of the discussions much evidence was elicited to demonstrate that speciality regional food producers do indeed perceive their products in this way. For example, in relation to the production of real ales, the microbrewers noted that the 'regional' nature of these products, such as it is today, is more due to the efforts of the brewers to attract the custom of the local population with locally preferred styles and brand names, than it is to any geophysical conditions or production traditions:

"*These days chemistry has moved on and we can create anything out of anything basically, so geographical location is not a factor any longer. Except insofar as if you are trading in a particular area, and if there are regional variations in how beer is produced and presented, then you are daft if you don't fall in with those regional styles. So that means, for instance that we produce beer with a head on ... so it has a nice creamy head and sticks to the glass. Whereas if we were brewing down in London we would brew it without a head, and we would expect it to be served without a head. So to that degree, there are regional differences, and thank God they are still there, those regional differences.*"

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

"*a lot is in the name of a beer. Two of our beers are the same, [brand1, a local place name] and [brand2, not a local place name] are the same beers. And it's amazing how many times you will hear people say 'that [brand2] is rubbish but the [brand1] is superb', or the other way around! So there is an awful lot in a name. So this is why if you can project an image ... and why Caffrey's was one of the biggest selling beers.*"

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

Thus, the territorial distinctiveness of beers is perceived to be driven by the preferences of local consumers and the images they attach to product styles and names, rather than being derived from specific materials or methods. The assertions of a cheesemaker in relation to his recently set up operation also support this notion, although in this case, the perceived impact of 'imagined' facets of territorial distinctiveness appears to be even more dramatic:

"*I even had a letter from [a local technical college] congratulating me on creating a tradition in eight years. I have now created a tradition of cheesemaking in Northumberland.*"

Q: Created a tradition?

"*People believe there has been cheesemaking going on here forever. And that's because of what I have done. It's true. I never told them it's been going on forever, but they believe there was a cheese industry in this county, and [this company] has managed to brand it. Takes some energy to do that!*"

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

Thus, the aspect of tradition which is normally associated with speciality regional foods is, in this case, an entirely imaginary notion invented proactively by the producer and shared between him and his consumers. Therefore in addition to tinkering with tradition, as was observed in the previous section on human facets of territorial distinctiveness, some producers report fabricating tradition completely from scratch. This recognition of the existence of imaginary facets of typicity in products was also revealed in the account of another cheesemaker, as he described the steps taken to satisfy the regulators for his (successful) PDO application bid:

"*I had to put in my PDO application that we have very soft water here because of the sandstone fells, and I said that makes it go straight into the soft fats you see, but I haven't*

a clue whether they do or not! But that's what I said and they accepted it, so ...! I had to come up with something to link it to the geographical area."

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

Like the previous cheesemaker therefore, this producer was also making an imaginary link between the product and the surrounding territory, although in this case it was through fabrication of geophysical facets, rather than tradition. Two final excerpts complete this reporting of the imagined facets of territorial distinctiveness. It may be appreciated from all the above accounts that, no matter how it is achieved, imagined territorial distinctiveness is perceived as a positive attribute because it helps to affirm the identity of products. For two producers in the sample however, the perception of their products as 'regional' was considered a retrograde step. Thus, in the case of a baker, regionality was associated with negative connotations of restricted outlook and parochialism:

Q: Would you describe your products as being regional products?

"*Well, there is two definitions of regional, one is 'made in a region', so to that extent we are a Cumbrian bakery, we are a north country bakery, so everything that comes out is kind of 'from here', but what you really mean by regional is having some regional roots, history, distinctiveness if you like. And the answer is we make some of those products, but we do not see ourselves as being a regional bakery in that sense... We don't want to be like the Grasmere Gingerbread Shop in Dove Street. We do Italian breads, French breads, not just taking ingredients and adding them to white flour, but trying to get under the skin of recipes, travelling to Amsterdam to visit bakers' shops there. We see ourselves as more international. We do have a sub-brand, but we don't want to see the whole operation as 'Yea Olde Cumbrian Baker's Shoppe'.*"

(Baker, Cumbria)

Thus although this producer did source ingredients locally and also (elsewhere in the interview) revealed strong feelings regarding the contribution of his enterprise to the local community, he felt that the imaginary notions normally associated with territorially distinctive foods did not accord with the meanings he himself wished to see attached to his products. A less eloquent, but nevertheless similar view to this was expressed by the fresh produce processor, in connection with his fresh soups and fresh produce lines:

Q: Would you describe the products that you make as regional products?

"*No. We did a Northumbrian Neep and Nip soup, which was swede and parsnip basically. It did eventually start selling really well, but I think it sold despite its name, because it was a very good soup, it didn't sell because of its name. It is the only time we've actually tried to ... it is very obvious the regional thing, isn't it?*"

Q: Has anybody thought of putting a 'made in the north east' label on things?

"*Yes, our strawberries were marketed by Safeway's for quite a long time as 'locally grown' strawberries, but I'm not really sure that the name ... I slightly wonder if the impact of this 'locally grown or produced' is becoming less of a selling point.*"

Q: What makes you think that is happening?

"*Well just through talking to our customers and supermarkets for that matter, I get the impression that it is something that's becoming less of an issue, whereas it was very much an issue a couple of years ago. I just wonder whether it's dying off a bit.*"

(Fresh Produce Processor, Northumberland)

Thus, for this producer the images conjured up by communicating 'local' or 'regional' on a product were perceived to be less advantageous to the creation of a positive, distinctive identity than other types of image. Overall therefore, some contrasts may be observed in interviewees' views regarding imaginary facets of territorial distinctiveness. The next part of the Chapter goes on to contemplate some of these contrasting views in more detail.

5.3 Discussion of Producer Perceptions of Territorial Distinctiveness in their Products

A detailed report has now been presented of interviewees' perceptions of territorial distinctiveness in their products, with respect to geophysical, human and imagined facets. Even when presented in a synthesised form, it maybe observed that a great variety of perceptions exist amongst this sample of producers as to the extent to which geography is thought to bestow special characteristics on products. In addition, a wide variety of actual production practices underpin this diversity of opinion. Thus, on the one hand, some producers communicate with enthusiasm and conviction about the influence of certain raw materials and particular natural environmental conditions on the organoleptic qualities of their end products. Meanwhile, other producers convey more scepticism about the direct relationship between locally sourced raw materials and end product qualities, and others effectively demonstrate accordance with this view by sourcing key ingredients for their products from national or even international locations. Similarly, in terms of production techniques and methods, some producers demonstrate commitment to traditional practices or processing equipment, and perceive these as contributory to the essential character of their products, whilst others, with reference to the basic simplicity of their processes as well as the incremental 'tweakings' in production they execute, convey the notion that human influences are relatively insignificant to geographic variation in food products. Finally, on the matter of imagined facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods, some producers convey the notion that the meanings projected onto their products - which may be invented meanings with little or no basis in reality - help to give a positive, distinctive identity to their products, whilst others perceive that such meanings are detrimental to product image.

In the face of this variety of views and perceptions, the next step for this part of the research involves a search for possible explanations with respect to the contrasting opinions. How can these apparently opposing views be accounted for? Is it possible to identify some way of making sense of them? By finding answers to these questions, the

investigation will be contributing to the understanding of the key research question of how territorial distinctiveness is bestowed on foods. Thus, the next sections of this Chapter present and explore possible explanations for the contrasting views expressed by interviewees regarding the extent to which territory is perceived to influence the character of their products. These explanations have been developed through careful and systematic scrutiny of the interview data, following the principles of grounded theory. As may be recalled from Chapter 4, these principles encourage the researcher to make sense of the data by placing them within the context of the interviewees' own circumstances, and by analysing them from the perspective that they represent meanings constructed by the interviewees, and therefore are reflections of how the interviewees perceive their 'world'. Throughout the following sections, reference is also made to the evidence for, and theories of, territorial distinctiveness in foods, as introduced in Chapter 2.

5.3.1 Perceived Territorial Distinctiveness in Foods according to Food Product Sector

One simple way of attempting to explain the difference in interviewees' perceptions of territorial distinctiveness in their foods is by clustering interviewees' opinions according to the food product sector they operate in. That is to identify, for example, that the microbrewers appear to share one set of views, whereas the cheesemakers share another. Such an approach does have intuitive appeal, as it may be expected that similar production circumstances and experiences might lead to some commonalty of opinion regarding territorial distinctiveness. Scrutiny of the data however, did not bear out this hypothesis. It was observed amongst the cheesemakers, for example, that two interviewees talked with enthusiasm and conviction about geophysical and human influences on their products' characteristics, whereas a third interviewee dismissed geophysical impacts as 'twaddle', and a fourth one spoke proudly of his 'invented tradition' of cheesemaking in the local area. Similarly amongst the microbrewers, one spoke of how his use of traditional equipment imparted a special flavour to his products, whereas the other

perceived that territorial differences in present day beers were mainly due to the application of place-associated brand names.

A slightly more sophisticated approach to explaining differences in interviewees' views by their sector type is to take the argument that levels of territorial distinctiveness may be related to different levels of complexity in food products. Thus, producers who are involved in making complex foods, derived from many ingredients and requiring elaborate processes, may have different views about the influence of territory than those whose products are comprised of few ingredients and are produced very simply. Certainly in Chapter 2, it was proposed that the influence of geophysical facets of typicity is likely to be diluted as the complexity of a product increases: as both Bérard and Marchenay (1995) and Moran (1993) argued, whilst it may be possible to isolate the effects of local soils and climate on wine or olive oil, this becomes more difficult in products like cheese or baked goods. The relationship between product complexity and human facets of typicity may be argued as being the converse of this: that is, territorial differentiation in production methods is less likely in very simply processed foods, whereas there is greater scope for distinctive methods and traditions where more elaborate techniques are required. Therefore, the data were scrutinised from the perspective of product complexity, to discover whether interviewees' views could be clustered meaningfully. Again however, this approach did not provide a satisfactory explanation for the disparity in perceptions: for example, neither the bee-keeper nor the soft drinks bottler perceived strong geophysical influences for products in their sectors (honey and spring water, respectively) despite both products being very simple. Furthermore, both shrimp pickers in the sample perceived that the product of potted shrimps *did* possess human facets of typicity, in spite of its lack of complexity, because of subtle differences in the precise mixture of spices used by each producer. Moreover, this approach of product complexity still did not account for the internal diversity of opinion amongst the cheesemakers as to the extent of territorial distinctiveness in cheeses. Therefore, an alternative approach is needed to explain the disparity of interviewees' views.

5.3.2 Perceived Territorial Distinctiveness in Foods as a Construction of Meanings

Having found that the contrasts in interviewees' perceptions do not appear to be related to the product sectors they are in, nor to the level of complexity of products they are producing, the data were examined again, this time from the perspective that the views expressed by the interviewees represent meanings which they construct in order to 'make sense' of their world: for example, to explain their circumstances or rationalise decisions which they make. This perspective was highly appropriate given the views and opinions under scrutiny. Not only were there lots of variations in opinions found across interviewees, but it was also observed that in some cases, the same interviewee would reveal a disparity between their expressed opinion regarding territorial distinctiveness in their products and their actual production decisions. This was highlighted most starkly in relation to the procurement of raw materials: for example, in the case of the cheesemakers who spoke eloquently of the important influence of locally sourced cows' milk on the flavour of their cheeses, but whose similarly labelled sheeps' cheeses used milk sourced from outside the region. This suggested that expressions of territorial distinctiveness were playing a role beyond factual accounts of products' derivations. Furthermore, the discovery that the producers in this sample were also adept at discussing territorial distinctiveness as an imagined quality, held in the minds of producers and consumers, suggested that the analysis of their views as constructed meanings would be a fruitful approach.

The views of the interviewees regarding territorial distinctiveness in their products were scrutinised again therefore, this time linking them to other expressions of personal opinion or standpoint conveyed over the course of the interview. Information regarding the immediate circumstances and situations of the producers, gathered either directly from the interviewee or from published sources (promotional literature, newspaper reports, etc.), was also linked in. Over the course of this analytical process, two intriguing explanations for the contrasting views emerged. The first of these concerns the personal value system of the interviewees. For some producers, it appears that they choose to use

certain raw materials, equipment or methods because they perceive that such things have an intrinsic value, or are 'right' to use: quite simply, the producer has a personal enthusiasm for these things and gets a kick out of being involved with them. Sometimes the use of these materials and methods is related to territory (e.g. locally sourced cows' milk for cheese-making or local, traditional brewhouse kit for beer-making), sometimes it is not (e.g. the use of imported fish for smoking, or imported fruit essences for soft drinks bottling). Regardless of the *actual* relationship of the product to the local area however, what appears to accompany the personal enthusiasm of some producers is a belief that the use of their quirky materials or methods lends a distinctive character to the final product which, because the final products are made in a certain place, is therefore place-associated. Hence, the result that some producers express conviction regarding the territorial distinctiveness of their products, in spite of evidence (expressed indeed by their fellow producers) to suggest that territorial distinctiveness is difficult to determine in present day speciality regional foods, both in terms of geophysical and human facets.

Whilst the above explanation centres on the notion of territorial distinctiveness in food products as a perception held by a producer, fuelled by their personal enthusiasm for using certain materials and methods, the second explanation approaches the issue of 'territorial distinctiveness as constructed meaning' from a slightly different angle. In the course of scrutinising the interviewees' perceptions and relating them to their immediate commercial circumstances, it emerged that the expression of belief in the territorial distinctiveness of products could be explained by the producer's desire to show meaningful differentiation from competitors. In this way, expressions of territorial distinctiveness are used as 'weapons' for inferring product superiority, or alternatively, greater veracity or authenticity of a product. For example, one cheese-maker who spoke with conviction regarding the influence of local cows' milk on the resulting cheese, and who was enthusiastic about communicating that his creamery was the "only creamery in [name of dale] making real [name of dale] cheese", was in a commercial situation whereby cheese of exactly the same name is being made legitimately all over the country,

and moreover, an antagonistic relationship had developed with a neighbouring creamery, which also claimed to make the 'real' version of the cheese. His expressions of conviction regarding the territorial roots of his own product could therefore be interpreted as a statement of 'self-determination'. By contrast, the Lancashire cheese-maker who dismissed geophysical facets of typicity in cheese as "twaddle" displayed less intense concern about direct competition from other traditional cheese-makers in the area, asserting that they "got on well". Indeed, his account of the process of PDO application conveyed a strong impression that the other producers were content to let him to take control of any commercial initiatives regarding the traditional cheese product, on their collective behalf. In this case then, the producer enjoyed a status of being in control of the collective traditional cheese product, the unique status of which was uncontested by other competitors.

Other interviewees who expressed more sceptical or prosaic views about territorial distinctiveness in their food products, and who were also the only, or the most prominent producers of their type in the area, were the soft drinks bottler, the bee-keeper and the Yorkshire baker. Meanwhile, those who expressed most conviction regarding their products' territorial roots (the other Yorkshire cheesemaker and the Yorkshire microbrewer) were also those who displayed concern regarding existing, or potential direct competition from other producers in the area. Thus, the disparity in views over the degree to which territorial distinctiveness is apparent in speciality regional foods may be explained by the need of some interviewees to stress the distinctiveness or uniqueness of their products, in the face of perceived intensive, direct competition.

5.4 Producer Perceptions of their Products' End Qualities or Appeals

Having reported and discussed the findings of the primary research regarding interviewees' perceptions of the extent to which territory influences their products, the Chapter now goes on to consider what these producers said with respect to the end qualities, or appeals, of their food products. In Chapter 2 it was proposed that from a

marketing perspective, speciality regional foods owe their nature and meaning not just to the materials and methods from which they are derived, but also to the intangible qualities imbued in them by those who give them economic value: i.e. buyers or consumers. Drawing from previous studies in this area (e.g. Kupiec and Revell, 1998; Kuznesof *et al*, 1997), it was identified that speciality regional foods may be associated with a variety of end qualities or appeals, including rusticity, naturalness or tradition. However much of this discussion was speculative in nature, and an understanding of how those involved in the actual production and marketing of these foods perceive the core appeals of their products was proposed to be a useful exercise. Therefore, the producers in this sample were encouraged to describe and explain what they felt their products offered to consumers. In practice, as noted in the preceding sections, the interviewees were generally very adept at conceptualising their products from this marketing perspective, and tended to give full and reflective views on these points. The next sections present and describe their views, synthesised according to the broad types of appeal proposed in Chapter 2, that is, rusticity, tradition, gourmet, naturalness and local pride. An additional appeal which emerged from the data, that of honesty/integrity, is also described.

5.4.1 Perceptions of Food Products as 'Rustic'

As the interviewees' descriptions of their products were examined, it became clear that a key perceived appeal of the products was that of 'rusticity': foods imbued with a basic, unrefined simplicity, which communicated a sense of wholesome goodness. This appeal often emerged as interviewees described their production processes, in which they conveyed the impression of their products being made through the use of uncomplicated methods, requiring little by way of expensive equipment or materials:

Q: And what sort of level of mechanisation is there in the production process?

"*None. I always way that this is one of the great benefits. If you give me a knife, and a leg of pork, and some salt, I'll produce a ham for you. You don't need a £10,000 machine in order to do it.*"

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

Q: Is your lack of mechanisation a conscious decision?

"No, not really, it's just the way that the things are made in small batches. It's absolutely useless to have an enormous machine if you're just going to make enough to do a little... so no, it isn't a conscious decision at all, but it's really not necessary with the simple products that we have."

(Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire)

Thus, these producers convey the notion of an uncomplicated process resulting in products embodying simplicity, with, in the second case, such processes being the result of the small scale nature of the overall operation. A further aspect of this rustic appeal however, was the notion of products as representative of home-made or home-cooked items, the kind of food created in a domestic environment and imbued therefore with the sense of heightened care alongside the simplicity:

"We wanted it to be real farm shop, specialising in home produced lamb and eggs and pork, and jam and cakes and things like that. So customers know it's fresh and if they ask us things we know when it was fattened and things like that. Traditional country food, that's what we really specialise in."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

"...it is not supposed to taste like Baxter's soup or Campbell's soup, it is supposed to taste like proper soup your mother would have made on the cooker, in the kitchen. It is supposed to taste like home-made soup."

(Fresh Produce Processor, Northumberland)

Thus these producers convey the notion that the special characteristics of their products rest on the fact that they represent home-produced products, from which may be derived associated qualities of freshness and veracity. In these excerpts, it may also be observed that rusticity is conjured up by the image of the production environment: thus, the notion

of jams and cakes being made in the farmhouse kitchen, or soups being cooked in a mother's home, contribute to the homespun, rustic appeal. Indeed, the image of the production environment attached to a food product was found to be of some importance to these producers, such that there was some bashfulness where the actual premises were perceived to be at odds with the rustic image perceived in the product. This was illustrated, for example, in the comment of one cheese-maker whose production facilities were sited on an industrial estate:

"*It's a romantic thing, people come up the dale and they wonder where the [name of cheese] farm is. It's proven because people ring us up and say we want to know where your farm is. We're quite glad they couldn't find us! They think we get up every morning and milk the cows and then make the cheese.*"

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

Overall therefore, an initial appeal which producers associated with their products was that of rusticity, communicated via the basic, simple production processes and the image (if not the reality) of a domestic or pre-industrial type of production environment.

5.4.2 Perceptions of Food Products as 'Traditional'

A related product appeal perceived by the producers in this sample was that of tradition: thus, in describing the nature of their production processes and end products, the interviewees conveyed the sense of their foods embodying historical or heritage-related aspects. In some cases, this was expressed through the notion of products as old-fashioned or belonging to another era:

"*we do loads of herbs from here, and packages of herbs, all sorts. People love buying those. They love the unusual things, vanilla pods are one of our best sellers, all the old-fashioned type, and all-spice.*"

(Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire)

"With the milk and the butter and the cream, because we have our own dairy herd, these all come straight from our own cows. We have someone who does the cream and the traditional farmhouse butter wrapped in the old-style greaseproof paper. It's a good seller."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

In addition, this latter interviewee also conveyed the notion that the traditional appeal of his products was bound up in their issue from an old-fashioned, mixed system of agriculture:

"that's why what we produce on this farm we call traditionally produced. Because it's like where you used to have a mixed farm, where you would have grassland for sheep and fat cattle or dairy, then you have a rotation of corn. Like a lot of the feed that the sheep and cattle get is produced on the farm, either the corn silage or hay, it's just traditionally what people used to do."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

Thus, the traditional appeal of the products was perceived not just in terms of their association with the ingredients or packaging materials of a bygone age, but also with whole lifestyles and systems of food production which were developed in particular areas. This notion of products being associated with historic people and situations was conveyed in a slightly different manner by other interviewees, who identified that their products' traditional appeal was derived from their origins in a distinct historical period, still conveyed through the present day end products. For example, both the Yorkshire confectioner and Yorkshire baker spoke of their end product and packaging designs being reflective of the Victorian origins of the firms which they now ran:

Q: The tins, are they the way they always were?

"Yes, more or less, the design has been slightly modified. But basically, it is a blue and silver embossed tin, and always has been [since 1840], that is the trademark of [the

original producer]. It is actually a registered trademark with a copyright - the design on the tin and the name [...] is all trademarked."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

Q: What is your packaging trying to say about the product?

"We like a classic design, with a Victorian feel to it because of our roots where we come back from [the original producer's] time in 1865. Obviously we try and keep that image once we hit on it, we try to ripple it through everything so people will immediately recognise our products on the shelf... there are elements within the design which you immediately recognise as [our] product, with the scalloped cornered box, and the logo and things like that."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

Furthermore, the Northumberland brewer conveyed the notion that the historic origins of the brewery contributed to the appeal of his products, one of which was named after the old building itself:

"When we have the trips here we tell them the history of brewing on this site. But we are quite lucky having the heritage on this site, it counts for a lot."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

Thus overall, tradition was conveyed as a key appeal of these producers' products, though the association of the products with old-fashioned ingredients or materials, or through the association with lifestyles and food production practices of a bygone era, which, in some cases, were reflections of the actual historic roots of the product or producing firm.

5.4.3 Perceptions of Food Products as 'Gourmet'

Thus far in the synthesis of interviewees' perceptions of their product appeals, a common theme running through the various descriptions of products and processes has been that of simplicity and basic homeliness. However another key type of appeal emerged which appears to be quite contradictory to this theme: this was the notion of products embodying a specialist, gourmet appeal. As with the previously reported themes, descriptions of this appeal manifested themselves in slightly different ways. First, there was the notion that the products offered extraordinary taste and texture sensations, something of an enhanced gastronomic experience for the consumer. For example, the words used by the cheese-makers to describe their products included evocative terms relating to organoleptic features, such as "creamy ... mellow ... rounded" (Cheesemaker, Lancashire). In addition, other cheesemakers likened the appeal of a good cheese to be akin to that of a fine wine, worth savouring as a professional gourmet might:

Q: What is it that you think makes [the product] different?

"Emm... the sheer quality of it, the sheer creaminess of the texture, the balance of the moisture, fats, proteins, moisture in it, you know all that makes it... when you taste cheese, you know when you've got a nicely balanced cheese, or whether you've got something in it which is a little out of balance. Very much as when people taste wines, you know, they'll say this is a little bit acid... you do much the same with tasting cheese, and when [this] cheese is good, it's really good."

(Cheesemaker, Cumbria)

"I'm in the business, rather like wine, where you are trying to brand the cheese, and you are trying to say that this cheese has a life of its own, it has a position in your diet and in your enjoyment... in your quality of life, in your lifestyle. It's a lifestyle issue, if you like. It's an indulgence, it's full-fat, go for it!"

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

The notion of a food product's appeal being derived from its enhanced gustatory qualities was also conveyed by other producers, for example a shrimp picker:

"*Potted shrimps are shrimps cooked in butter and then sealed in butter, in pots. Not mince - not like potted beer or potted meat, it's an actual shrimp cooked in butter. And it's put in pots and sealed in butter as well with spices. It is a delicacy really, yes.*"

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

Meanwhile, other producers conveyed the gourmet appeal of their products through describing their status as gift items, products special enough to be treasured and enjoyed by others. Within this, was the notion that these products, when purchased outside of their immediate production location, might also offer an exotic appeal:

"*The reason why we have decided to supply [name of export agent] is because he has accounts in 147 countries for his own products, which are similar food-type products but are aimed at the gift end of the market. Our product is the same, we do not look on this as just [a confection], we look at it as a gift product as well.*"

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

However, the soft drinks bottler conveyed the notion that whilst his spring water was an 'up-market' type of product, it was, in a sense, not exotic enough to consumers in the local area, who were perceived to prefer foreign waters if they chose to buy into the sophistication appeal of mineral water:

"*It's very difficult to get ... the local perception is why should we spend money when we can get it out of the tap? And obviously it's not the case, what we get out of the tap is not anywhere near the same, it's had all sorts of things added to it, but it tends to be when you live in an area like this, it's a case of 'we've got the best water in the country coming out of the tap, so why should we go and buy it?' that's what happens. And then if they*

do go and buy it, they go and buy a French one or an Italian one ... so it's something completely different."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

Thus, in some cases, certain products were perceived as struggling to achieve the gourmet appeal in the local area, although they were perceived as having this quality outside the area of production. However, a final intriguing dimension of the gourmet appeal of these products emerged as some interviewees spoke proudly of the VIP patronage which their products enjoyed. In this way, it became clear that some speciality regional food products were those perceived as 'fit for royalty'.

"*We are very fortunate that we have a royal warrant for the production of [this product], to Her Majesty the Queen. And I think [the local workforce] takes quite a pride in that. it always tickles me to think of this funny little backwater, and we have that royal warrant, which is wonderful. Something I'm very, very proud of. It certainly has done a lot for business, there is no question about that. Opened a lot of doors!*"

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

"*That was a letter I received from the Queen, I sent some [of the product] down to the Queen because she takes [name of confection].*"

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

"*we only have the best type of prawns you can get - potted shrimps - which are like gold to get nowadays... The shrimp harvest this year hasn't been good at all, and Mr Baxby who makes the Queen Mother's shrimps, we've had no stock from him for about four months because there haven't been any shrimps in Morecambe Bay.*"

(Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire)

Thus overall, many interviewees perceived that their products possessed a sophisticated, gourmet appeal, conveyed in their descriptions of their products as gustatory delights, as exotic specialities or gift items, and as foods fit for consumption by royalty. It may be noted that this set of perceived appeals seems to contrast somewhat with the preceding appeals of rusticity and tradition.

5.4.4 Perception of Food Products as 'Natural'

A fourth appeal for speciality regional foods which was proposed in Chapter 2 was that of 'naturalness': that is, the appeal of the product as being relatively close to nature, in a state of purity and unadulteration. Certainly, the description of products as pure, natural and untainted by artificial additives was common to many producers, from the soft drinks bottler in relation to his spring water, to the delicatessen owner in relation to her more complex, multi-ingredient products. In the former case, for example, the purity appeal of the product was conveyed and framed in quite scientific terms:

"*[The water is low in nitrates], low in everything, its purity ... we do nothing to it bar put it through a filter, nothing. All we can do is put it through very very fine micron filters, we don't do anything to it, really, other than that. These are the analyses that we get ... zero, zero, zero... The lab said they've never found such water, they've never found anything quite so pure.*"

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

However, some mixed messages did appear to be expressed regarding the status of products as unadulterated and additive free, with the revelation that additives were used in some instances:

"*We do put a sweetener in. There's a sweetener in there, we use a sulphate aspartame. We put citric acid into it, natural acid ... sodium benzoate, carbon dioxide, sweeteners, and ascorbic acid which is vitamin A.*"

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

"The nice thing about cheese is that it is a very simple product, really. Great traditional [name of cheese] is milk... rennet... you then add salt, that you're preservative and adds to the flavour, you add your starter - that's like a natural yoghurt - very clean, wholesome ... and really that's it. It is a very simple product, a very wholesome product, it is not messed around with. We do have a couple of E number within our additive cheeses, but we still try to use natural products, cranberries, blueberries, all natural products really."

(Cheesemaker 1, Yorkshire)

Thus overall, many producers in this sample perceived that their products offered natural and purity appeals, although in some cases actual production processes appeared to be at odds with this perception.

5.4.5 Perceptions of Food Products as Symbols of Local Pride

The final appeal of speciality regional foods proposed in Chapter 2 was that of food products symbolising or embodying the endeavours of local populations, for which they may be very proud. There was strong evidence that some producers in this sample perceived that their products enjoyed this kind of appeal, although it manifested itself in two different ways. The first way involved the historic association between the production of the product and the local area or town in which the production site was based. The long-standing value of the firm as a local employer and as an outlet for local skills and labour would therefore be encapsulated in the products. Interestingly, in the two cases in this sample where this type of product appeal was perceived most intensely, both production sites had been subject to a fairly recent closure scare, resulting in the galvanising of local energies to keep the firms in business and keep the products on local shop shelves. Both interviewees described eloquently the link between these rescue efforts and their products' current popularity:

"And the [local] people, they are a fighting type of people, they didn't want to close [the creamery] because it was important to them ... The management at that time were very

keen and committed to keeping it open ... And now we are five years on and we go to shows in the south of England and people will always say, 'you were the factory that nearly closed, weren't you? Well done, congratulations, and let's have a bit of cheese'."

(Cheesemaker, Yorkshire)

"The ex-MD of [the firm] came to see me about Christmas of last year. He said he was going to close the company down because he did not want to invest £30,000 towards new tins to continue trading ... We started initially retailing [the product] and it went absolutely berserk with the new publicity, we trebled the turnover in the retail shop within weeks... We are having people coming in all the time, bringing things like this in, this is a family tree going back to 1891, of the [original producer] and the children... there is a proud history by [the townspeople] and Yorkshire people for the [confection] ...[searches for folder], I have a whole file full of bits and pieces ... it was in the Financial Times, and we have been on television four times, and on local radio four or five times."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

In addition to this notion of the products' appeal resting on the historic association between it and the local population however, another way in which the producers in this sample conveyed the appeal of local pride was in the status of the product as symbolising new small enterprise. In particular, two interviewees, both of whom had moved relatively recently to their present production location, spoke of how they enjoyed plenty of goodwill in the local area, such that they perceived that their products embodied a spirit of new energy and enterprise which was attractive to people:

"you see this 'small is beautiful', there is this sort of perception, people do have some empathy... I've had people come in and say 'go for it, well done, hope you make a success of it, I hope it works for you."

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

"But you know I've got enormous goodwill in the county, enormous goodwill... I don't think I've ever met anybody who doesn't champion the small business ... all the media will do something on me at the drop of a hat and ... it's very gratifying in that case if you get an order because of people being so kind.... people are genuinely ... people who come into the shop are enormously kind and enthusiastic for us and they do buy much."

(Cheesemaker, Cumbria)

Thus, the appeal of speciality regional food products as symbols of local pride manifests itself in two ways: first, through the historic association between a local area and the firm, heightened when that firm is threatened by closure, and second through the product being an embodiment of a spirit of new enterprise and endeavour.

5.4.6 Perceptions of Food Products as Symbols of Honesty/Integrity

The perceptions of product appeals reported thus far have been structured under headings proposed in Chapter 2. This final perceived appeal, however, was not anticipated and emerged during the process of examination and scrutiny of the perceptions of interviewees. This appeal of honesty and integrity refers to the notion of speciality regional food products as those which offer trust to the buyer or consumer, in terms of both the materials and methods involved in making the product, as well as the association of the product with the person making it. For example, as some interviewees discussed their relations with their consumers, what became apparent was the close association of the personality of the producer with his or her end product. The image of the producer as a skilled artisan, producing with care and honesty a good quality, fair product, seemed to be a perceived appeal:

"Why would they buy mine? I like to think that we have gained a little respect in the marketplace, through trying to be honest and trying to put out a very honest and genuine product. Now, I can think that people would trust the product, and trust us as well, and

I'd like to think that there would be a degree of integrity there... that they would say, 'well, that's from [name of firm], *therefore it'll be ok, I'll use it'.*"

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

Thus a final, unanticipated perceived end product appeal was that of the honesty or integrity of the product, due in part to its association with the personality of the producer. By purchasing the product, the consumer is therefore buying into a vision of food production which embodies particular notions of propriety and 'rightness'. This notion of the producer as follower of integrity-laden, honest operational ethic is further explored in Chapter 6.

5.5 Discussion of Producer Perceptions of Product Appeals

The preceding sections have reported, in a synthesised form, the key appeals which the producers in this sample perceived as being associated with their products. Thus, through scrutiny of the descriptions they gave regarding their production processes and end products, it has been found that interviewees perceived their products variously as rustic, traditional, gourmet, natural, and symbolic of local pride. In addition, it also emerged that some producers perceived that their products offered an appeal of honesty or integrity to the consumer. Whilst these results confirm the speculation in Chapter 2 that speciality regional foods may be imbued with a variety of end product appeals, what is required now is further exploration of these varied notions. This is to arrive at a more in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in society today. As with the perceptions of producers with respect to territorial distinctiveness, it would appear that a number of contrasting views and mixed messages are being expressed in relation to what these speciality regional foods symbolise and offer the consumer in terms of intangible end product qualities. In particular, there is the observation that on the one hand, these foods are being conceptualised as simple, unassuming, rustic items, embodying 'run of the mill' ubiquity, whilst on the other hand, they are conceived of as luxurious, indulgent, gourmet delicacies, embodying 'out of the

ordinary' uniqueness. How can this apparent contradiction be explained? To explore this matter, the procedures of grounded theory were followed once again: thus, relevant data were organised and examined again closely, placing the expressed descriptions and perceptions in the context of the interviewees' operating environments and circumstances, and linking in other relevant perceptions that they made, for example with respect to their company backgrounds and product histories. Over the course of this process, it emerged that to explain the observed contrasts in product appeals, it may be useful to draw from the theories and insights presented in Chapter 2, which relate to the social history of foods, and their status as cultural symbols. These are now discussed in the following sections.

5.5.1 Perceived Product Appeals as a Function of the Social History of Products

When considering the social historical perspective of foods, drawing from the theories and insights of authors such as Burnett (1999), Mennell (1996) and Mason (1999), it is clear that the foods which may be thought of today as 'regional specialities' have diverse backgrounds and histories. For example, although many such foods have their origins in widespread rural, pre-industrial agricultural production (e.g. bee-keeping for honey; meat processing for hams, sausages and bacon; cheesemaking; fish smoking; shrimp picking; brewing) which would suggest that the products would therefore be imbued with appeals of simplicity and rusticity, some have more precise origins and elite associations. Amongst the sample of products examined in this research for example, the initial manufacture of the confectionery product from Yorkshire was found to have been stimulated by a very precise historical circumstance: the offering of a flavoursome sweet to aristocratic ladies taking the local, bitter, spa waters. It would therefore be understandable that such a product would become imbued with characteristics of speciality, not least because it was developed for an upper class section of society. So at a basic level of contemplating the social histories of food products, it is possible to explain why some may be perceived as 'lowly' and others as more 'elite'.

However, if one looks deeper into the social history of the products in this sample, further distinctions between the ubiquity and speciality of foods can be drawn. The period of industrialisation, and its 20th century aftermath, may be thought of as instrumental here. From Chapter 2, it was noted that whilst industrialisation had a pervasive effect of militating against territorially distinctive food production (Pelto and Pelto, 1983; Oddy and Burnett, 1992; Twiss, 1999), it was also an era where individual firms and entrepreneurs started to give discrete identities and brands to products which otherwise had been made on a collective, haphazard basis in the pre-industrial environment (Burnett, 1999). This process of branding products may be thought of as the transformation of such products from relatively anonymous, lacklustre, ordinary items to identifiable, unique, speciality products. Thus, amongst the products examined in this Chapter, the Northumbrian smoked fish product is an example of an item which was transformed from an anonymous entity, undifferentiated from a multitude of similar products from all over the east coast, into a named speciality, through the efforts of one entrepreneur to brand the product distinctively for the London market (Mason, 1999).

Furthermore, it may be argued that even in product sectors where many individual firms existed and single, specific brands did not rise to prominence during the industrial age, the continued impacts of industrialised production and 20th century agrifood policy in the UK served to reduce the overall number of firms in these sectors. Thus, the products of those producers who managed to stand their ground effectively became specialities, on the basis of their increased scarcity. Following this argument, it may be thought that what has occurred within some food product sectors is a process of appropriation (or revival) of collective *savoir faire*, food production skills and techniques shared by numerous producers within an area, by a very few remaining individual producers, who effectively take ownership of the know-how and the product by branding them as their own. This is a third way in which common, unremarkable products become branded specialities, and may be used to explain the dual appeals of simplicity and speciality perceived by a number of interviewees in their products, as they attested to a severe

decline in numbers of other producers of their type in their locality (e.g. the Cumbrian Meat Processor, the Yorkshire Baker and most of the cheesemakers). Figure 5.1 depicts schematically the different social historical processes which have been argued to have impacted on the perceived speciality of these regional food products.

Figure 5.1 Social Historical Impacts on the Perceived Speciality of Food Products

Pre-Industrial Era →	Industrial Era →	Post-Industrial Era
Widespread, territorially influenced, hand-crafted food production	Entrepreneurs 'brand' some hand-crafted foods	Hand-crafted products have rarity value; 'appropriation' or revival of collective savoir-faire by few remaining producers
e.g. cheeses, honey, meats, breads	e.g. Craster kippers	e.g. Whitby gingerbread
food products generally perceived as simple, basic and undifferentiated	some food products become perceived as specialities	food products perceived as both simple, rustic because of pre-industrial roots, but specialities because of rarity in post-industrial era

5.5.2 Perceived Product Appeals as a Function of Cultural Conditioning

It may be noted that the above social historical perspective, by tracing the changing nature and extent of production of these products over time, helps to explain why it is that some products may be associated with rusticity and others with speciality, and why sometimes these two appeals appear to overlap. Essentially, the explanation is based on a concept of rarity value: where many producers exist making broadly the same product, their offerings are likely to have a basic, simple appeal (if they are made in a non-industrialised way, then rusticity and tradition may also be included), whereas if the products are made by only one or a very few producers, they have speciality appeal through being uncommon. Another, related, way of explaining how present day regional foods may be perceived as both simple, rustic items as well as luxurious gourmet foods is to draw from the sociological and anthropological theories of food as a culturally significant item (e.g. Mennell *et al*, 1992; Goody, 1982; Murcott, undated). According to these theories, introduced in Chapter 2, foods are imbued with meanings and appeals not merely on the

basis of the actual nature and extent of their production, but also on the basis of the socio-cultural forces shaping the perceptions of the members of the community. Some foods therefore carry more 'cultural capital' than others because this is how the cultural mores of a particular society, in a particular era, determine food choice and discrimination (sometimes with the cultural choices reflecting the rarity dimension of the food). Thus for example, in the 19th century shrimps were perceived as a delicacy, yet in earlier centuries they were despised (Tannahill, 1988).

Following this broad approach, authors such as Montanari (1994) identify that a set of foods which appear to be imbued with high cultural capital in modern western industrialised countries are those which emanate, or appear to emanate, from pre-industrial, rural, peasant-style production environments. Thus, coarse breads made with unrefined, dark grained flour are perceived as embodying positive characteristics today, whereas they were rejected in favour of refined white bread in previous centuries. Similarly, foods made using primitive, hand-crafted methods and basic raw materials are now prized whereas in the time of industrialisation, foods derived from the new wonders of machine manufacture were favoured. Indeed, what Montanari asserts is that the simple and the basic and the rustic in foods *have become* the special and the gourmet: perceived aspects of rusticity are worth dwelling over, savouring and eulogising. Furthermore, if a food offers some form of territorially distinctive tradition, then following the arguments of Warde (1997) and Amilien (1999) who propose that members of modern industrialised societies search for roots and authenticity, such food products are likely to be imbued with many prizable virtues, despite - or rather because of - their simplicity of composition and rusticity of production method. Thus, in the case of the products examined in this Chapter, it is possible to explain why a processed meat product, created as the producer himself asserts, in a very simple, basic manner using a minimum of ingredients, may nevertheless be considered a gourmet item, because the product represents a kind of golden, rustic, idyllic activity which is far removed from the lifestyles of many of the consumers who buy it.

5.5.3 France as a Cultural Reference Point for Interpreting Food Product Appeals

Following the broad theory that the nature and meaning of food in society is conditioned by cultural mores, there is a final, related, means of explaining why it is that amongst this sample of speciality regional food producers, end product appeals were perceived as being both simple and rustic but also luxurious and gourmet. According to Moran (1993), it is possible to argue that in Europe, as elsewhere in the world, the cultural reference point which is often turned to in order to interpret and display distinction in foods is one which is derived from French food culture: the gourmandising of foods on the basis of their pre-industrial production methods and territorial associations is a highly French-inspired activity. In the particular product sectors where this type of activity appears to be most enthusiastically adopted (e.g. wine, olive oil, cheese, processed meats), it may be expected to find that the perceptions of specific products are couched in these gourmandising terms. Support for this argument is indeed found amongst the producers in this sample, as the cheesemakers referred not only to the indulgent, gourmet appeal of their products, with their enhanced gustatory qualities, but in some cases, likened the appreciation of their products to that relating to fine wines. Overall therefore, it seems that in the case of some product sectors, the influence of the French approach to the contemplation of gastronomic qualities in foods, which has its basis in the appreciation of territorially associated, non-industrial production, may help to explain the dual appeal of speciality regional foods as both rustic and simple, and also luxurious and gourmet.

5.6 Summary

This Chapter has presented the results of the primary research component of this investigation with respect to speciality regional food products. A detailed report has been given of the perceptions of the participants of the in-depth interviews in relation to their products, focusing on two key areas of uncertainty: the extent to which territorial distinctiveness is perceived to influence the characteristics of regional food products, and the nature of the end appeals of these products. In relation to perceptions of territorial

distinctiveness, conflicting views were found to exist on the extent to which geophysical and human factors impacted on product characteristics, with some producers expressing enthusiastic conviction about the importance of these factors, whereas others conveyed more scepticism. It was also found that interviewees were adept at perceiving territorial distinctiveness as a projected, imagined phenomena, decoupled from the realities of the materials and methods surrounding production. In further analysis, the discrepancy of views regarding the impact of geophysical and human factors on product characteristics was examined, with the conclusion that speciality regional food producers express conviction about territorial influences either to support their personal enthusiasm for using certain materials and methods, or because territorial distinctiveness serves as a 'weapon' to 'prove' differentiation from perceived direct and intensive competition.

The second part of the Chapter found that with respect to perceived end product qualities, five key appeals of 'rustic', 'traditional', 'gourmet', natural' and 'symbol of local pride' were expressed, in addition to a further appeal of 'honesty/integrity'. The apparent contradiction that speciality regional foods are perceived as both simple and rustic, but also luxurious and gourmet was analysed further, identifying two possible areas of explanation. The first, which drew from a social historical perspective of speciality regional foods, concluded that different foods have been subject to distinct types of production history, which has imbued them alternately with associations of humble ubiquity and special exclusivity, both of which may be perceived in the present day products. The second explanation, which drew from theories of food as a culturally symbolic item, concluded that in present day industrialised countries, foods which emanate from, or appear to emanate from, pre-industrial production environments are highly prized. What is more, the adoption of a French approach to gastronomic appreciation in this country means that speciality regional foods can be imbued with both rustic simplicity and gourmet luxury. Having reported the results of the research in relation to speciality regional food products, the following Chapter will now report the results relating to the mentalities and activities of the producers of these products.

Chapter 6: Behaviour and Mentality of Speciality Regional Food Producers: Results and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Having discussed in Chapter 5 the findings of the primary research with respect to speciality regional food products, attention now turns towards the producers of these foods, to explore in-depth the behaviour of the individuals who bring these products to fruition. What is the nature of their outlooks and tendencies? What mindsets or mentalities underpin their decision-making? The studies of small and craft-based firms reviewed in Chapter 3 were found to raise intriguing possibilities with respect to these questions. On the one hand, it was argued that the small firm's lack of resources and the aesthetic, lifestyle-centred ethos of the craftsperson may militate against the existence of market-oriented behaviour. On the other hand, some evidence indicates that limited resources may not detract from a market orientation, and that craftspeople are perfectly capable of being pragmatic, commercially astute individuals. Overall therefore, uncertainty remains as to the behaviour and mentality of speciality regional food producers. Thus in the primary research, the 20 interviewees were encouraged to talk at length about their day-to-day production and business-related activities, as well as to contemplate and ponder their wider goals and aspirations. The results of their views are reported as follows. First, the perceptions of the interviewees as small firm managers are given, with evidence to confirm that these interviewees experience 'typical' small firm problems of a lack of resources, but also other problems more specific to their status as food producers. Next, the views of the interviewees in relation to their activities and mentalities are reported, synthesised under the headings of 'market orientation', 'entrepreneurship' and 'craftsmanship'. Overall, evidence of the existence of all three types of behaviour is found within these interviewees' accounts and perceptions. The final sections of the Chapter go on to discuss this finding in more depth, with the object of explaining the apparently multiplicitous nature of speciality food producer behaviour.

6.2 Speciality Regional Food Producers as Small Firms

In the primary research, an initial area of inquiry was the extent to which speciality regional food producers faced problems and circumstances 'typical' of small firms, for example, limited resources and facilities. This was of interest because in Chapter 3 it was argued that these problems and characteristics may impact on producer behaviour and mentality (e.g. Carson and Cromie, 1989; Hogarth-Scott *et al*, 1996). In this research, interviewees talked freely about their day to day activities, and through this it became apparent that severe financial, human and time resource constraints were perceived, all very typical of small firms. First, in terms of financial constraints, many mentioned cash flow as a source of concern: in particular, the vulnerability arising from late payments from debtors:

"*Like any business these days you have got to think about the cash flow and if you can get round that one, life is a lot easier. One of our problems is that we supply the butcher and he finished up by owing us £12,500. I have my doubts as to whether we will ever see it, it's a complicated story. You can't go on forever writing off bad debt... another company went bust on us, they liquidated and after the legal fees were paid there was nothing left for anyone else.*"

(Meat Processor 1, Cumbria)

Another interviewee conveyed the problem of cash flow slightly differently: because of his desire to support small, local retail outlets, and his recognition of their cash flow problems, he spoke of financing his business to take account of their debt:

"*What we are finding is the grocers that are still on the go, anything they get they have to pay up front for ... because they are perceived as a bad risk. All the small high street traders are perceived as a bad risk. If Spar, for example, advances them a load of groceries, they want paid up front. So when I go with my stuff, the grocer says 'we'll pay you when we have the money'. So basically, I run my business so I can carry*

£30,000 worth of debt ... the smaller man very often cannot pay so we run about a £30,000 deficit all the time."

(Bee-Keeper, Northumberland)

In addition to perceived financial vulnerability however, many interviewees also conveyed a lack of resources with respect to time. Often, a picture was painted of the interviewees being rushed off their feet producing products and 'fire-fighting', leading to an exhausting schedule. This is illustrated in the comments of one cheesemaker, who attempted to introduce a new product into the line only to find that time was taken up entirely with production activities as a result:

"*So we were working in here five days a week, waiting for everyone to go home on Friday afternoon, get the goats' milk in, start making the little cheeses so by Sunday afternoon they were ready to go out Monday morning for shipment. So we were working seven days a week for three months, the kids were in the office playing on the computer, and it just wasn't getting anywhere.*"

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

In addition to the exhausting schedule, other interviewees noted that their lack of available time due to involvement in production and dealing with day to day problems left no opportunity for any other activities perceived as important to the business:

"*...you haven't got time to stand back and take an overview of what you are actually doing and where you're actually going. It makes it very difficult, because as soon as you come through the door in the morning you've got jobs to do, this to do, that to do .. and it's ... planning time to stand back, take stock of what you're doing, where you're going ... the time is not always there to do it, and I think it should be. I think a lot of self-employed people, particularly small business people, spend a lot of time chasing the rat's tail if you like, but they haven't the time to look in its face and say 'where the hell do you*

think you're going?'! No, it's very difficult, there's so much to keep an eye on, particularly in the manufacturing type of business."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

In addition to planning and 'taking stock', other interviewees conveyed the notion that dealing with day to day problems prevented them from conducting publicity and networking activities:

"*We can send cheeses down to competitions, but we should actually take the cheeses down there and represent [our company]. But with two kids and a business to run it is very difficult to do, we can't really warrant the time off to go to London and push the cheese.*"

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

"*I mean we get a lot of bumph through the post from [North West Fine Foods] and I try to read as much as I can, but when you are working hands-on a lot of it just goes in there and three weeks later you think 'I should have done that'. And I'm afraid that happens a lot, it does. And we miss all sorts of things. There was a meeting last night, the AGM, I booked to go, but we got ten deer in yesterday, and I couldn't get away. So I had to phone up and cancel.*"

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

Thus, what these brief excerpts illustrate is that in terms of the 'typical' small firm characteristic of a lack of resources, there was much evidence of this problem amongst the producers in the sample. Moreover, there is evidence in their views to indicate that the lack of resources is perceived to impact upon business-related behaviour, by preventing them from undertaking key activities. Before going on to report findings related to the interviewees' behaviour however, two further perceived constraints on business operations emerged during the interviews, both of which related to interviewees'

status as *food* producers. These were, first, a perceived misunderstanding or mistrust of their operations by mainstream retailers and regulators, and second, perceived difficulties in gaining access to the mainstream supply chain. In terms of the first perceived constraint, it became apparent in the accounts of some interviewees that a lack of understanding was seen to exist amongst buyers and representatives of major retailers as to the nature of small-scale, craft-based food production processes. For example, two interviewees spoke of altercations they had experienced with supermarket representatives:

"*We've had technologists from some of the very large groups come in here, and who threw up their hands in horror when they walked into the drying room when we had the heaters on ... and say we've got a massive problem with the refrigeration, but we say it isn't the refrigeration, it's heating, which we need to dry the things up. And so this leads me to think that there are many, many people - with the greatest respect - who don't understand what this process is about.*"

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

"*We had an audit done for Sainsbury's ... This man walked into the store outside, supposed to be an expert in cheese, and he said he nearly passed out. He said he looked at the cheese and saw it had fur on it ... He was going to call the Environmental Health Officer. [My partner] lost his temper, he said 'you'd better get out of my dairy - I don't care who you are, my cheese is healthy, there is nothing wrong with it - you obviously haven't got a clue what you're talking about'. So he sent this man away with a flea in his ear. Sainsbury's rang up and said what's been going on, and [my partner] said don't ever send a person like that to my dairy again, he didn't have clue what he was talking about.*"

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

In addition to the 'usual' constraints therefore, some interviewees faced the added burden of dealing with commercially important people who construed their processes as

unhygienic or unsafe, because such processes were unusual within the mainstream food sector. Furthermore, some interviewees felt that this tendency to 'misunderstand' was allied to increased health and safety regulations (as the Soft Drinks Bottler commented, there are "manuals on manuals" relating to the extraction, transport and bottling procedures for his spring water), as mainstream operators were perceived to be fearful of handling perishable, craft-based products:

"*The supermarkets are not happy with the ... environmental health officers' recommendations, oh no, they're not. They're absolutely scared to death of having an incident and an insurance claim. That's their problem. They say, 'shellfish, well... you've to have chilled working areas, fully tiled, change of clothing, shower' ... for the two of us? You'd have difficulty convincing them that your product is quite safe, and that's the problem.*"

(Shrimp Picker, Lancashire)

Thus, interviewees found themselves either having to meet the required specifications of mainstream operators, with considerable financial consequences, or else choose to rule out this type of distribution channel, as was the case in the above example. Access to markets also formed the basis of the second added constraint perceived by these producers, which was expressed in terms of perceived difficulties in 'fitting in' to mainstream supply chains. In Chapter 5, it was noted that some interviewees, such as the Northumbrian Fish Smoker and the Yorkshire Confectioner, had problems in procuring key ingredients from local suppliers, such that they were sourcing materials (raw herring and tins, respectively) from international locations. In both cases, the scaling up of domestic suppliers had meant that the low volume procurement needs of the interviewees were no longer of commercial interest to the suppliers, leading effectively to the exclusion of interviewees from these domestic upstream supply chains. A similar state of exclusion was perceived to exist between interviewees and the downstream supply chain, although

in this case, the exclusion was felt to be a result of contract agreements and vertical integration between larger manufacturers and downstream distributors and retailers:

"The trouble is most of the outlets for the beers are still controlled by the big breweries and various pub groups which are still controlled, they have agreement with the big breweries - directors who took early retirement and all of a sudden acquired 200-300 pubs, with a sole agreement with that particular brewery to supply them. So it is a very small part of the market that you aim for."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

"Big companies are buying out hotel groups and they've got nominated suppliers so you lose about two or three customers a year just because a group has bought out one of your little hotels and they bring their own suppliers in you see, so we've lost two or three there ... Kirkby Lonsdale, we used to do quite well, and then one group bought three or four customers in the same area you see, so... and if they are bringing in four or five thousand between them, it's a fair drop to a small business."

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

Furthermore, in one case, an interviewee perceived that larger manufacturers entered into distribution agreements on the basis of offering unmatchable price promotions:

"Britvic as a company and Coca Cola Schweppes, they probably have the biggest push because they ... I mean we lost one account in the Lake District because Coca Cola Schweppes said, well, if you buy all your soft drinks and cordials from us, you can have your water for nothing. So, you have to turn around and say well, I can't beat that price, I'm sorry! It's not on. So this is the sort of thing you come up with as a small company. At any particular point in time they could, literally knock you down."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

This section has demonstrated that the speciality regional food producers in this sample experienced 'typical' small firm constraints through a perceived lack of resources, and moreover, because of their nature as food producers, they also experienced a heavy regulatory burden (linked to a lack of familiarity with craft-based production processes) and the exclusion of options in the supply chain due to upscaling and concentration. What all of this implies is that such constraints may impact on the behaviour and mentality of speciality regional food producers: in particular, it raises questions about the propensity of these producers to behave in a market-oriented manner, especially in the light of interviewees' own perceptions about conducting key activities and being able to take a strategic perspective. The next sections now focus in more detail on what interviewees conveyed with respect to their behaviour and mentality, beginning with evidence relating to market orientation.

6.3 Producer Accounts and Perceptions: Evidence of Market Orientation

In Chapter 3, market orientation was identified as a key form of business behaviour, advocated by many authors as an 'ideal' approach to commercial survival and growth for firms operating in industrialised, competitive markets (e.g. Kotler, 1997). The orientation itself was depicted as being comprised of two main dimensions (derived from the work of Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990; 1993). First, a set of 'mindsets' (including, for example, an external focus, a strategic perspective and an emphasis on growth) and also a set of activities (for example, research and planning). As the producers in this sample talked at length about their business activities and operations therefore, and expressed in their own words their goals and aspirations, their views were reflected upon in terms of what they demonstrated about these two dimensions of market orientation. Findings were unexpected. First, with respect to the 'mindset' of market orientation, much evidence was found of the kind of external and strategic perspectives associated with market oriented behaviour, in spite of interviewees' previously noted concerns regarding the detrimental impacts of time and resource constraints. For example, interviewees readily conceived of the 'position' their firms and products

occupied in the marketplace, demonstrating a sensitivity to, and understanding of, their competitive situation. Thus, when interviewees talked of possible retail outlets they had the opportunity to distribute to, it was clear that selection was made on the basis of the outlet communicating the same market status or 'position' as their own products. Often, this meant finding outlets with an up-market or niche position:

Q: Have any of the other supermarkets shown an interest [in your products]?
"Well yes they have but ... I think it would have to be the top end of the market really for the supermarkets, [the products] are really for the - how shall I put it - for the delicatessen counter. The speciality delicatessen rather than a run of the mill."

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

"We have had an inquiry from Walter Wilson last year, they were wanting us to supply them. But without being nasty, Walter Wilson isn't the sort of niche supermarket I would like to supply, they are at the bottom end of the trading."

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

This sensitivity to the position of the firm in the marketplace was demonstrated further in the accounts some interviewees gave of how their businesses had developed in the first place. In these accounts, interviewees were quite explicit about being driven by the market, thereby revealing their appreciation of the market-oriented dimension of meeting identifiable customer needs:

"About 8 or 9 years ago we built that building over there, and rightly or wrongly we were pulled by the trade, rather than doing something that you didn't know if you would sell or not. We found out what our customers were wanting, and we went along the lines of what the majority of people would expect to see in a farm shop, rather than make it a delicatessen."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

Other interviewees demonstrated their sensitivity to the external environment through their perceptions of how to behave in order to maintain and develop the business in the future. In these accounts, interviewees revealed their ability to conceive of their status relative to competitors, and to perceive the need to monitor the environment and change in order to keep identifying the most appropriate kinds of sales outlets:

"*I would like to think that we are sufficiently established that we would go on for 20 and 30 years. And we can only do that by diversifying into stuff that people want and finding places that are still viable, outlets that are still viable.*"

(Bee-Keeper, Northumberland)

"*Up to five years ago [the product] was very successful, then as trading patterns changed [the firm's] traditional outlets, which might have been corner confectionery shops and good quality confectioners throughout the country, these started to alter as supermarkets took over, and [the previous owners] didn't push the new market. They didn't push for wholesale business and consequently the business didn't grow.*"

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

Thus in these excerpts, it is revealed that the producers in this sample possessed elements of the external focus and appreciation of environmental monitoring normally associated with a market orientation. Similarly, in relation to the strategic perspective of market-oriented behaviour, interviewees also demonstrated quite compelling abilities to describe and conceive of their operations in this long-term, 'wide-angle' fashion. For example, one interviewee spoke in quite sophisticated terms of consciously developing the business, from an early stage, as a portfolio of complementary activities, all revolving around the attraction of visitors to the production site:

"*We had built in the concept of [visitor access] from day one, for instance, we'd put a gallery in when we first did the brew house ... because we've got the luxury of space we*

were able to provide proper car parking which we needed from a planning point of view. And also we had sufficient space to put in a food operation. [The catering] side of it operates as a profit centre in its own right, but we are doing it as a three cornered thing: the brewery tours, the shop and the bistro food and drink side of it. They all have their own little role to play within the visitor centre."

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

Another interviewee, meanwhile, spoke of developing new products in order to offset seasonal fluctuations in demand for existing products:

"Then what we actually decided is that we needed to find other products that we could use to even out the peaks and troughs of the early trade. So we looked at biscuits and plum bread about seven years ago now and we found a local wholesaler in Darlington who decided to stock our biscuits and our plum bread and did immensely well."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

In relation to future plans too, these producers demonstrated a long-term, strategic perspective in conceiving of how the core benefits or appeals of their products could best be developed and expanded upon in the future. For two of the interviewees, this involved a perception of replicating the attraction of their small-scale formula across a wider geographical base:

"...we do have plans to expand our retail side of the business and we are going to open very similar types of shops to this one in the surrounding tourist towns, possibly in some of the Dales towns ... where there are big volumes of visitors. We feel that it is a successful formula that can be re-tailored, with the history and all the things we have got to back it up. We are even considering a franchise operation as well. But that is long-term."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

"On the subject of business development, my long-term aim ... is to try to reproduce the small, focused, craft bakery, where fresh bread is coming out of the oven during the day for people to see and smell and buy, in appropriate places, on some sort of franchise basis, possibly supported by [a central bakery] for the more difficult products or the longer-life products.... That is the way I see things going eventually, but in order to sustain a credible network... you have to have a strong, clear identity at the heart of it. And I don't mean we would try a cloning operation, far from it, I would actually like to see those offshoots as members of the family, i.e. with the same parents, but very different characteristics."

(Baker, Cumbria)

Overall therefore, there was much demonstration amongst the producers in this sample of the ability to conceive of business operations and developments from a market-oriented mindset: that is, with appreciation of the external environment and competitive positioning of the firm, with recognition of the need to base development on customer needs, and with sensitivity to the distinctive core benefits of the business portfolio when considering long-term developments. Amongst all this evidence however, there were some indications in interviewees' accounts of how their businesses started or grew, that perhaps the reality of business development did not always accord with the market-driven, strategically determined approach so widely articulated. As the previously cited interviewee commented with respect to his own firm's origins:

"[the local mill owners] said they were hoping someone was going to set up a bakery to use all their flour - this was their business plan 1970s style, first of all produce the thing, then see who you can sell it to! However, I can't criticise because I did exactly the same thing, I thought well, I can make a loaf of bread. So I did, I literally did that ...I also discovered that the local community was not that interested in organic wholemeal bread... so I had to go effectively looking for a market, or responding to where the market was

coming from, which was people coming to the area and also people coming to me saying would you supply our specialist shop."

(Baker, Cumbria)

In some cases therefore, the carefully planned, environmental-scanning approach to business development conveyed by the interviewees may not always have been borne out in their actual experiences. Thus far, the external viewpoint and the strategic perspective of market orientation have been considered for these interviewees, which leaves a final aspect of the mindset of market orientation: that of an emphasis on growth. For this aspect, an intriguing discrepancy appeared to exist between many interviewees' professed standpoints with respect to growth and the accounts that they gave elsewhere in the interviews relating to the expansion of their operations. Thus, on the one hand, many interviewees professed to have modest growth goals, stimulated, for example, by concerns over control or ownership of the firm:

Q: What are your future plans?

"Steady growth. And the finger on the pulse so that if tastes change and the marketplace changes, we can change with that. But steady growth, we nearly went over-trading a while ago - getting too busy too soon - we want to get bigger, but not too big."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

"*We are happy the way it is, I mean, we would like to grow a bit more obviously, you cannot stand still, you have to grow each time. But I wouldn't want to grow to the point where we lose control. And I do know people who have lost control of the business. Hopefully our kids will take the business on.*"

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

The notion of there being limits to the ideal size of the firm was, indeed, commonly expressed. At the same time, however, many of the interviewees were in the throes of

expansion plans for their operations (for example, the Confectioner, the Cumbrian Shrimp Picker, the Soft Drinks Bottler, the Fish Smoker and the Cumbrian Baker), either to achieve a greater volume, or more efficiency, of production. Growth therefore seemed to be a complex issue, with interviewees having notions of types and rates of growth appropriate to their goals, rather than being soundly 'pro' or 'anti' growth. Overall in terms of the mindset of market orientation therefore, there is much evidence to suggest aspects of this mindset are prevalent amongst the interviewees in this sample, although their articulation of these aspects may not always have been mirrored in the reality of their experiences. Attention now turns to the second dimension of market oriented behaviour, that of the execution of certain activities, such as research and communications. From the results relating to the status of these producers as small firms, it was expected that the interviewees would give little evidence of conducting such activities, and indeed, that any activities relating to their marketing mixes would be executed in a similarly non-textbook fashion. Yet once again, some of the accounts and perceptions of the interviewees served to refute this assumption. This was illustrated by two views given in relation to research activities:

"*All the time we have to be changing, we go to the gift fairs. It's desperately difficult getting enough time to research, but my husband has become a master of hounds ... recently he's been made a judge, he judges all over England. So when that happens it's a good chance for me, while he's busy judging, I do as much research as I can. We're off to Devon tomorrow and he's judging at Honiton, and we come back on Friday and he judges at Lowther. So I've actually got three days of research this week!*"

(Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire)

"*It's amazing because consumer attitudes and consumer knowledge is changing so much... and people like us, we've got to know what we're talking about. I go out to the Womens' Guilds during winter, I like doing this, I enjoy it because it's wonderful research and I get a view from the consumer.*"

(Meat Processor, Cumbria)

Thus although the above interviewees did not carry out research in a formal, textbook way, they nevertheless conducted the activity in a fashion appropriate to their resources and circumstances. A similar approach was taken with respect to communications and promotion, with evidence of interviewees making use of local contacts to design and promote products:

"The label was designed by an art student at Manchester University... [our guy] that used to work for CCSB, he was at one of these trade shows, and this chap was wandering around and he chatted to him ... he said, I'm the head of the art department at Manchester University... our guy said 'I've got just the job for you, how about a commission, get your students to design two labels for my company' ... he said fine. So we offered £100 prize for the best design, and off they went. About 60 of them each designed a label, they all came back here, we sifted through them, we picked one out, said yes, we like that one."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

In addition to activities relating to promotions and design, it was found that activities relating to the development of new products were also conducted in a market oriented fashion, as interviewees conveyed that they followed an iterative process of development, responding incrementally to feedback from customers and the trade, and combining this with their own experience as producers to achieve the best product:

"If we fetch a new recipe out, we do a small batch and give it raw to the customer, and we know they'll give us their honest opinion. Then you take the average comment to see if it can be improved. All you ask for is an honest opinion, and they are great."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

"You start off with a base recipe then you take on board the feedback you get from people and start to tweak it. You don't make huge changes but you start going in the direction that you think your customers want you to be, you meet them halfway."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

At the same time as displaying evidence of conducting market oriented activities however, with all the allusions to close customer relations which these imply, some interviewees were nevertheless quite unsure as to the particular type or profile of person who comprised their customer base:

Q: Do your consumers fit into any type or profile?

"I have absolutely no idea who buys my cheese. Absolutely none whatsoever, that's why you need research to find out! As long as they keep buying it ... no, I don't honestly know."

(Cheese-maker, Lancashire)

"I don't know. We have never done any research to try to establish who actually drinks it. I think - though it's only my instinct - that it is quite a wide spectrum of people. It is not necessarily the whiskered and sandled CAMRA brigade. We seem to get a wide variety of people coming through. I'm flannelling though, I don't know."

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

Thus in spite of evidence of the execution of market oriented activities, and the adoption of a market oriented mindset, in some cases this belied the actual in-depth knowledge of customers possessed by interviewees. Notwithstanding this however, it may be observed that the accounts and perceptions reported in this section in relation to market orientation refute somewhat the assumptions about small firm behaviour proposed in Chapter 3. Indeed, the evidence presented here demonstrates that the interviewees in this sample did convey adoption of a market-oriented mindset, and they also executed market-

oriented activities, albeit in an informal fashion. To conclude this section of results relating to market orientation however, a final intriguing result emerged from interviewees' accounts and perceptions, which has more general implications for the investigation of marketing behaviour of small firms. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the term 'marketing' was not referred to during the interviews unless the producers themselves volunteered opinions on it first. Where this happened, it was found that regardless of the interviewees' actual orientation (as deduced from their accounts of business operations and decisions described above), they tended to convey a somewhat self-effacing perception of their abilities in this area, or else demonstrated scepticism or mistrust of the term:

"*I don't know that I am a very good marketer! Locally we market as well as we can. I don't know that we've got a market philosophy really, we ought to have more of that really.*"

(Delicatessen Owner, Yorkshire)

"*I think marketing, there is a lot of kidology in that. My background is in farming. If anyone came to me selling something with high pressure, that would be it, I'd show them the door.*"

(Meat Processor 1, Cumbria)

Thus, in the above excerpts, different interpretations of 'marketing' are apparent: in the first case, the self-perception expressed is somewhat ironic in that this interviewee had elsewhere in her accounts and perceptions demonstrated an astute market-oriented mentality. Meanwhile, the suspicion of marketing as evinced by the second interviewee, may be explained by the farming background of some producers in this sample, which, as highlighted in Chapter 2, is a sector with a traditional emphasis on production. Indeed, this was commented on by the Northumbrian Cheesemaker, himself a diversified livestock farmer, as he described the approach in farming to be "*produce, boys,*

produce". Overall however, what the above discussion indicates is that 'marketing', as a term, is problematic to investigate amongst this type of producer because it appears to be loaded with various meanings, which may lead research participants to perceive it in terms potentially far removed from their actual behaviour.

6.4 Producer Accounts and Perceptions: Evidence of Entrepreneurship

Following the reporting of evidence of market orientation amongst the producers in this sample, attention now turns to results regarding evidence of entrepreneurial behaviour. In Chapter 3, it was noted that small firm owners or managers, by their very nature, may have distinctive characteristics and tendencies due their particular choice of professional lifestyle. Some authors refer to these characteristics and tendencies as 'entrepreneurial', with creative thinking, opportunity-seeking and a desire for independence commonly identified as 'typical' (e.g. Stanworth *et al*, 1989; Carson, 1995; Bridge *et al*, 1998). However, some questions were raised as to the propensity of speciality regional food producers to display such characteristics, because some entrepreneurial tendencies appear to be at odds with the predispositions of the craft-based producer (e.g. Hirschman, 1983; Townroe and Mallalieu, 1993). Thus, the accounts and perceptions of interviewees in this investigation were reflected upon in terms of what they revealed about entrepreneurial behaviour. As with market orientation, results were intriguing.

First in terms of creative thinking, much evidence of imagination and innovation was apparent in the developments interviewees had made to their product lines and portfolios, in some cases leading to an impressively diverse range of offerings and activities. For example, the Yorkshire Delicatessen Owner, over the course of the interview, spoke of a trout farm, smoking operation, game rearing, shooting, a restaurant, and a corporate entertainment venture, all existing on the estate premises in addition to the delicatessen outlet. The Northumberland Bee-Keeper meanwhile, had developed a visitor centre on his site which contained a veritable cornucopia of products (a vast range of honeys and wax-based items, from candles and polishes to cosmetics) and displays (boards depicting

the lifecycle of bees, a glass-encased hive showing bees in the process of developing a honeycomb, and a wall mural painted by a local artist, depicting historical scenes of bee-keeping in the local area). In both cases, the interviewees had used creativity and imagination to diversify and add value to existing operations. Other producers meanwhile, had creatively extended their product lines, resulting in an impressive range of product types and flavours. For example some of the cheese-makers had developed products comprising different lengths of maturity, degrees of smoking and milk types, as well as additions of fruit, nuts, herbs and beer.

In addition to displays of creativity, there was also compelling evidence amongst the accounts of some interviewees that they were also highly disposed to seeking out new business opportunities, including reaching out to geographically distant markets and securing 'big' accounts, such as contracts to supply supermarkets. For example, at least half of the interviewees were in the process of exporting their products or had recently done so, a fact which was conveyed with degrees of pride and enthusiasm:

"That [bottle] that says 'imported', they went to the United States. That label has the different legislation on for the United States. We sent something like 10,000 to the United States ... Not many breweries this size can get their beer into the United States! It served its purpose, it got us there, and we hope to do it again."

(Microbrewer, Northumberland)

"[our distribution] is very wide and we sell all over the world. All over the world, yes. Directly to the ship container, then to Australia, Canada, the Middle East, the whole of Europe..."

Q: Is [exporting] worth it?

"Oh yes, oh God aye. I mean we're getting into the Baltics and it's incredible. And I find them actually easy to deal with, I find all exporters easy to deal with ... I find them more positive ...when they do reach you, they're interested, they want to do business,

they're ... not like for example Sainsbury's where it takes 18 months, with an American, two meetings and you've got your product going across the Atlantic."

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

Similarly in terms of securing contracts to nationally important retail outlets or major catering accounts, such as those of rail and air companies, more than half the interviewees were engaged in such contracts at the time of interview. Again, such accounts were conveyed as comprising a significant, regular, part of the business:

"50% of our business is going through the one client [Virgin West Coast] ... there's a contract signed which guarantees us a job until November 2001. We're currently looking for other alternatives, Virgin planes is one, Virgin Atlantic is one that's on the line at the moment, and two other catering companies at Manchester and Heathrow."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

"I think we have fairly well cornered the high-class deli, grocer and department store market, and we also do catering soups too, ones for Scottish and Newcastle which we do. We supply to their depots, which supply to pubs. We worked with them for about a year developing 8 soups specifically for their pubs. We also do various railways, we do GNER, Great Western, and we have just started to do Anglia."

(Fresh Producer Processor, Northumberland)

"In London we supply Fortnum and Mason, Selfridges, Harrods and Bluebird, which is a new Terence Conran shopping place. We don't supply them direct, we've tried doing it and it was very difficult because Harrods would phone up saying they wanted three boxes tomorrow. And because we are located here ... the economics of it, it was not very viable. So we have got - he's not an agent - we actually sell them to him, and then he supplies them on to the shops."

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

What springs from all of the above accounts, aside from the enthusiasm and pride of the owner in his or her firms' achievements, is the hard work and commitment invested by the interviewees to seek out these kinds of opportunities and secure this type of business. In this way, the interviewees appeared to be displaying the kind of ambitious, growth-oriented tendencies associated with classic entrepreneurial behaviour. Indeed, in further discussions with the interviewees as to exactly how the above business opportunities were sought and secured, the role of the interviewees themselves in proactively pursuing the opportunity became even more apparent. For example, the Soft Drinks Bottler wryly commented that the securing of the Virgin West Coast account was the result of "*bloody hard work - years of it!*" Alternatively, the following account of the Northumbrian Fish Smoker regarding his attempts to secure a contract with British Rail catering, illustrates the proactive chutzpah possessed by some of these producers:

"*When British Rail were privatised, the catering arm of it was put out separately ... I read about it in the Journal, and there was this chap that was going to be the chairman of it. So I wrote to him and congratulated him on his management buy-out, sending him a box of kippers and asking him what he thought about them. Because I read in an article that British Rail used about 70 thousand kippers a year... So he kindly wrote back and said he thought the kippers were great, and [they said] that next time it came up for tender, they would give us a whack at it.*"

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

Although in this latter case the contract was not secured, what the above examples illustrate is that many producers in this sample had an opportunity-seeking 'spark' of the classic entrepreneur and, moreover, were prepared to work hard to pursue distant markets and major accounts. Opportunity-seeking manifested itself in another way in the accounts of the interviewees: that is, through the involvement of the producers in the building of alliances with other firms in order to develop new business opportunities. Such alliance-

building was evident either along the supply chain, or indeed with useful support institutions or other, similar types of producer:

"*We were very quickly able to build up a chain of wholesalers, you can see up on the map there it goes from the Scottish Borders all the way down to Bristol. So that was really good for us, but most of those just took the plum bread. They would distribute them out to the shops and say it was really good, have you got any other [of our] products? That is why we have been trying to find other long shelf life lines that we can ride on the back of the plum bread, consequently we are working on the Yorkshire Brack now. That has taken a year, we have been working with Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association, and the University of Humberside.*"

(Baker, Yorkshire)

"*It's the slack periods ... February's the worst, it's a dire month. So they are the times when we need to fill the business in. What I am thinking of doing is starting a Gourmet Club. With the Club, you would join, maybe £50 a year membership, and for that you are guaranteed a couple of pound of smoked salmon at Christmas, something at Easter, then maybe April, September. Plus you'd get a monthly newsletter of other things we were doing... [I could get oysters from] a guy at Lindisfarne that grows them. I have already spoken to him, telling him I'm thinking of smoking oysters, would he be interested. And then I could also do it with [the Northumberland Cheese-maker], have some of his cheeses as a monthly offer, do it that way.*"

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

Also as examples of alliance-building, two producers in the sample who had been involved in kick-starting applications for PDO or PGI designations, had done so in co-operation with other producers in their area. The first of these, the Yorkshire Microbrewer, spoke of getting together with three other brewers who also used Yorkshire Stone Square fermenters in their processes, to apply to make the system "*a designated*

regional process". In the second case, that of the Lancashire Cheese-maker (whose prosaic attitude regarding geophysical influences on cheese, and whose creativity in delineating PDO boundaries for the local cheese were reported in Chapter 5), the role of the interviewee himself in providing the stimulus and the energy for the collective bid was clear:

Q: Tell me about the PDO, you seem to have put a lot of your own energy into it?
"Well, I had to, because the scheme was for groups, not individual producers, and I mean I couldn't come out with protected Lancashire for me and not let any of the other guys .. So yes, I had to run around ... we did have an association anyway, it was quite easy to ring them, we worked together in a loose sort of way... so yes, I brought them altogether and explained what the PDO was all about, some thought it was a waste of bloody time, some thought it might be useful ... and so they said 'you do it ... you know, you apply on our behalf'. So ... [rolls eyes] I did."
Q: And what did you see in it?
"Marketing potential. You know, I could see the consumer was looking for more traditional... they wanted something they knew to be traditional, real ...very much like the organic ... I could say 'you don't need the organic - this cheese has been made like this for a hundred years'! So that's what I thought."

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

Thus in the above case, it appeared that it was the energetic, forward-looking mentality of one individual producer, combined with his disposition towards co-operating and working with others, which led to the pursuit of this perceived business opportunity. Interestingly, when discussing further the prevailing dispositions and mentalities of small producers, this interviewee conveyed the notion that something of a culture shift had taken place within his firm, which was linked to changes in personnel:

Q: How is it there is co-operation in this company, where has it come from?

"It actually comes from my ... it wasn't always the case, we were little Englanders just as much as anyone else, but I hired a man who changed the ethos of the company ... yes, I hired him about four or five years ago ... and he is just very good at what he does, and he can see ways to grow by working together... I mean, we've done very well in exporting and we've always been traditionally in the independent sector and the wholesale sector. My father didn't like the supermarkets, because they came out and told him how to do things, and that he couldn't take his dog into the factory, things like that. So he said, I'm never doing supermarkets, there'll always be room for a few independents .. well of course, there isn't now. So when me and my sister took over in the early 90s, we said no, this is wrong, we want to approach the supermarkets."

(Cheesemaker, Lancashire)

Thus in the above accounts, and in those relating to the securing of major accounts, the producers in this sample demonstrated the kind of creative, proactive, opportunity-seeking behaviour associated with the classic entrepreneur. This finding is interesting in light of the interviewees' previously reported concerns regarding their disadvantaged status as small food producing firms, in that they lacked resources and were excluded from mainstream supply chains. Notwithstanding these perceived difficulties, it would seem that in practice many of the producers in this sample are extremely adept at securing business in mainstream supply chains and are able, despite resource limitations, to devote much energy and effort into pursuing these opportunities doggedly. Such tendencies appear to be at odds with those associated with 'craft' producer mentalities and behaviour. Before going on to consider evidence of the interviewees as craftspersons however, the final key characteristic of entrepreneurial behaviour is considered, that of independence-seeking. On a superficial level, independence certainly appeared to be a positive goal or benefit for these interviewees, as they spoke warmly about the freedoms and autonomy which accompany self-employment. However, in scrutinising further the interviewees' perceptions of engagement in supermarket contracts, and also those relating

to firm ownership, a more complicated picture emerged. In spite of the previously reported evidence of the willingness and proactivity of producers in this sample to secure contracts with big distributors, some interviewees nevertheless equated engagement in such contracts with an unacceptable loss of independence, control and freedom of decision-making. As the Bee-Keeper commented in relation to the inquiries he received from supermarkets:

"Well they would buy from us, but they would obviously restrict me in a way that I do not want to be restricted, in that I want to be independent because I have already got the weather. We are livestock farmers for a start, and there are implications for being in livestock farming with disease and all that sort of thing. You've got to look after stock which is a fair responsibility on its own. Then we've got the weather, which we are particularly vulnerable to. So I don't want, at the end of coping with all those problems, to have my financial status governed by a buyer in a supermarket. It's not on really, I want to be independent."

(Bee-Keeper, Northumberland)

Now, although this producer was one of the few who did not appear to have distributed to supermarkets at all, similar concerns regarding independence were voiced by other producers who *had* pursued large distribution accounts. Furthermore, some of these producers expressed additional concerns of loss of firm identity and product integrity when supermarket contracts are entered into:

"There is no way I could possibly supply national supermarkets. For one thing, I would not want to, because once you got into them they would screw you for price, and I do not have the capacity here. And I don't want to open a factory on a trading estate in Ashington just because I'm getting a grand from the government ... and I'm losing what [this firm] is all about."

Q: What is it all about?

"Producing [the product] in [this village], a small family firm. I mean, I'd like to be producing [the product] to 80% of my capacity for 11 months of the year. But I do not particularly want to go into something where I haven't got control ... the product would come secondary to the quantity you'd be turning out."

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

"I think if you've got a product you believe in, you'll succeed. But where do you want to be, that's the thing you see. If you got automatic machinery in potting shrimps, it would be ... it wouldn't be the same."

Q: It wouldn't be the same?

No.. no

Q: Some people would say it would be more efficient

"Yes, but you're not small. You lose the identity I think. It wouldn't be called a small business then ... a family business.

Q: I'm interested you said you would lose your identity...

"Well I think the pressure of business would push you ... into superstores and that sort of thing really. You'd just become another name on the shelf wouldn't you?"

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

Crucially, both of the above interviewees had been amongst those earlier reported producers who had demonstrated the opportunity-seeking tendencies where big accounts were being pursued. Indeed, the latter producer, elsewhere in the interview, spoke of his investment in expensive washing equipment for raw materials in connection with the securing of a supermarket contract! Thus, the need for independence was conveyed in convincing terms by many interviewees in this sample, although in practice, different 'degrees' of this state appeared to be in operation. With respect to firm ownership too, interviewees demonstrated some ambiguity. The Yorkshire microbrewer, for example, spoke of his original desire in setting up the brewery as the creation of a "*rebirth of independent brewing*" in the local area (the previous brewery which he had run having

been subject to a hostile take-over by a major brewer). Yet he had decided to turn the present brewery into a public limited company with 700 shareholders, making it vulnerable to future take-over bids and a similar loss of independence. The Cumbrian Baker also expressed ambiguous views on ownership, at one point conveying strong feelings regarding not wanting to cede ownership, yet at another stage in the interview asserting that during a financial crisis, the continued existence of the business was more important than the issue of whether ownership of the firm should be shared with outside investors. Overall therefore, in relation to the entrepreneurial characteristic of independence-seeking, interviewees tended to convey strong positive feelings on this matter, though opinions as to what constituted a satisfactory level of independence seemed to vary from producer to producer.

6.5 Producer Accounts and Perceptions: Evidence of a 'Craft' Mentality

Thus far, this Chapter has considered the accounts and perceptions of the interviewees from the point of view of what they reveal about propensities for market-oriented and entrepreneurial behaviour. Much evidence has been found to indicate that the producers in this sample showed tendencies and characteristics commonly associated with both types of behaviour. Attention now turns to the consideration of interviewees' accounts and perceptions as manifestations of a 'craft' mentality. In Chapter 3, it was found that some small firm theorists used the term 'craftsman' to denote an individual displaying behaviours which are, effectively, the antithesis of market orientation and entrepreneurship: i.e., non-growth oriented, inward-focused, and production-led (e.g. Stanworth and Curran, 1976; Smith and Miner, 1983). Similarly, in studies specifically of those producers engaged in craft-based production, some evidence points to individuals pursuing lifestyle-oriented, aesthetic goals rather than being commercially minded (e.g. Townroe and Mallalieu, 1993; Hirschman, 1983). To what extent did the producers in this sample accord with these notions of the 'craftsperson'? To present the findings, this section commences with a report of how interviewees described their production processes, to gauge the extent to which the techniques and methods employed

by these producers can, indeed, be thought of as craft-based. The section then proceeds with consideration of the evidence of a craft mentality amongst the interviewees, drawing from their expressed attachments and loyalties, their perceptions of standards and senses of propriety and finally, their views regarding their relationships with customers and the trade.

6.5.1 Producer Perceptions of their Production Processes

An initial point to address in the investigation of a 'craft' mentality was how production processes were actually described and conceived of by the interviewees. Were they portrayed as 'different' from other producers in the interviewees' sectors, and could they be thought of as craft-based? Interviewees talked at great length about their production techniques and processes, and in these accounts there was much evidence to suggest that they *did* perceive their methods as different from larger, industrial producers, though this was manifest in a number of ways. First, a number of interviewees conveyed the notion of their processes requiring high degrees of technical skill and know-how, with the inference that this can only be gained through considerable hands-on experience:

"When we make the [product], it is critical when the butter is put in, and it's critical when different things are added, and they are all added at certain temperatures. It is not just a case of putting all the ingredients into a pan and turning the burner up and then leaving it, and thinking when it's ready you can tip it out, because it doesn't work. It's all very critical, it is all timed, it is all boiled down to certain temperatures, different ingredients are added at specific times, all written down in this recipe, to produce this unique, excellent [product]."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

"I mean, we take care in them, we do not rush them when they are smoked. And you have to be aware, when using the traditional kilns like us, today's a windy day do the

fires would blaze up more, so you have to put more sawdust on them to keep them down. It's all technical stuff you know!"

(Fish Smoker, Northumberland)

In some ways, these assertions of the need for technical know-how contrast with the perceptions of speciality regional food products as very basic and simple, as reported by some interviewees in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, what the above views do convey is the notion of production processes which necessitate a hands-on effort that is more involving than that of more mechanised processes. As one microbrewer commented in relation to the processes of larger breweries:

"*What they tend to do is they have much more process control. The valves and the process and the monitoring of temperatures and so on are all done through panels and mimic diagrams, automated valves and that sort of thing. The one man can sit at a console and run the brewhouse from there, by pressing buttons and seeing through his mimic diagram where everything has got to, which of the valves are open and which are closed. Whereas our fellow has to get off his backside and actually go downstairs. Which is far better for him!*"

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

This notion of hands-on commitment was also conveyed by the expression of the need for speciality regional food producers to combine their technical knowledge with persistent, tenacious, hard work:

"*There's people that have tried bee-keeping, there was a firm that bought a farm up in Scotland and it was bankrupt within about four years, they didn't have a clue. They put a manager in and he didn't really know. And he said 'my day ends now' at 5pm, and wouldn't work Saturdays and Sundays. Well we work Saturdays and Sunday afternoons*

as well. And the day ends at 11 o'clock at night, because if you are not actually working you are always thinking about what you have to do."

(Bee-Keeper, Northumberland)

In addition to the technical knowledge and committed effort, many interviewees also conveyed the notion of the *manual* nature of their production processes being an essential characteristic of their work. Often, the commitment to manual, hand-made methods was conveyed with high degrees of passion and resolve, particularly when the interviewees were asked whether they would ever contemplate scaling-up, or adding more mechanisation to their processes:

"We won't mechanise anything where it will take away from the craft aspects of the business, because we want to set ourselves apart from the rest by specialising in quality and making things the way they should be made, in our opinion ... If everyone made the same way using machinery, or a lot of companies now buy in pre-mixes, consequently everything looks and tastes the same. We try to keep our individuality by doing things the way... I mean, we are proud of our craft. We are craftsmen. We don't believe in splitting a bag, adding water and then mixing it and putting it in the oven. That is not what we are about."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

"I would say our production method could not be produced, as it is, on a Cadbury's type line, and make a million tins a week, because it couldn't be done. It would lose its uniqueness. It can only be done the way it's done now. This is one of the reasons that I was able to buy the company in the first place because there was a lot of people, a lot of the big confectionery people [who] wanted to come in and change everything ... they wanted to produce their own product, and the traditional, unique [product] would have been lost forever. When I went to see [the previous owner] I put it to him that we would

not change the recipe, we said we would keep everything as it is. So basically there has been no change at all."

(Confectioner, Yorkshire)

"If we were to expand, we would have to employ somebody else and we would have to buy more weights, more moulds. Rather than go more automated - we just couldn't do it - we'd have to buy more hand-made weights and things like that. Whereas most people, if they get to a certain size, would say 'get it all onto a machine, do it over three staff and off you go.' We couldn't do it. Even if we tried, it wouldn't work. That's what makes us different, that's what they class as hand-made."

(Cheesemaker 2, Yorkshire)

Thus, the above excerpts illustrate the strength of feeling many interviewees expressed with respect to the manual, hand-made nature of their production processes, with the notion conveyed that such methods are essentially, and indeed emotionally, important to them. Interestingly though, in each of the above excerpts a market-oriented justification is also used to support the committed stance to manual processes. Thus, the interviewees speak of manual processes as sources of 'individuality' and 'uniqueness', a dimension which makes them 'different'. In addition to speaking from the heart therefore, it appears that the interviewees also perceive the value of their processes from a commercial perspective. It would appear that the heart-felt, deterministic attachment to manual production and the commercial usefulness of such methods co-exist in the perceptions of the producers in this sample. Indeed, the potential for compatibility between production determinism and commercial advantage was formally articulated by the Cumbrian Baker, as he reflected on his persistence in making breads out of personal preference, rather than in response to market demand:

"[the rye bread] was the one thing that the [supermarket buyer], on his first visit here, alighted on and started to sell. And if it hadn't been there he wouldn't have taken us on

and the whole history of the company would have been changed by not having that unique product which he couldn't get anywhere else. And I was only making it because I liked it, and had a conviction that it was worth going on making it even though we were only selling it in small quantities. So you have your business gurus who say you should go through your product list, and have your 80:20 rule, and you should cut out this, but it misses these little bits of serendipity where somebody is just doing something for some intuitive reason, and it pays off."

(Baker, Cumbria)

What all of the above excerpts indicate therefore is that the producers in this sample conveyed heart-felt commitment to manual methods and quirky products, demonstrating a personal belief in them, whilst also expressing the commercial dimensions - indeed asserting the commercial bonuses - inherent in a deterministic approach. A final way in which producers in this sample conveyed the difference between their production methods and those of larger-scale, more mechanised processes, was through the notion of their methods encompassing an artistic, affective dimension, guided by human intuition and judgement:

"I'm actually trained as a photographer and actually making cheese is very much the same sort of thing ... in photography you are dealing with the tones in light, and with cheese you are dealing with amounts of bacteria and it's ... the same sort of gentle juggling ... Also, photography has a sort of artistic element to it, and I think cheesemaking does too because you do it because you like the appearance of it, the feel, the look ... it is the feel of it, in photography all your sense have be alert and in cheesemaking all your senses have to be alert too ... because you are doing it by smell, sight, touch ... you're doing it by noticing everything that changes slightly."

(Cheesemaker, Cumbria)

"I'd like to think there is still a certain amount of instinct and feel in producing a beer. It's a bit like somebody with green fingers in the gardening scene. You need somebody who can empathise with the brew. I'm probably too emotional for my own good on that subject, but I think that is part of the deal. Whether at the end of the day it produces better beer I don't know, but it is more fun on the way!"

(Microbrewer, Yorkshire)

In contrast, more industrial production was described in terms of being 'sterile' and 'automatic', resulting in "*bland and dead*" (Bee-Keeper, Northumberland) products being "*churned out*" (Cheesemaker, Cumbria). Industrial and mechanised production methods therefore tended to be couched in negative terms. The exception to this was where interviewees explained the use of any mechanisation or modern technology in their own processes, such as the use of pasteurisers and stirrers amongst some of the cheesemakers, or washing equipment for shellfish as used by one shrimp picker. In these instances, mechanisation was couched more positively, in terms of assuring greater hygiene and safety or allowing for better product quality. To sum up therefore, what this section has found is that the producers in this sample *did* set their production methods apart from larger-scale, more industrial processes, through their technical, hands-on, intuitive nature. In some cases however, different degrees of mechanisation were evident in the processes of the interviewees. The next section now goes on to consider whether there is evidence of a 'craft' mentality to accompany the craft-based processes identified.

6.5.2 Producer Accounts of their Attachments, Loyalties and Relationships

In searching for evidence of a 'craft' mentality, what is being looked for is evidence in the accounts and perceptions of the interviewees that non-commercial or market-related values are held. Thus, revelations are sought relating to prioritisation of lifestyle goals rather than growth or profit maximisation, or attachments to people, places or senses of propriety which are non-commercial in nature. In these aspects, there was much in the interviewees' accounts to draw from. First, in relation to the attachment to certain

lifestyles, some interviewees were explicit about pursuing a way of life rather than perceiving themselves as go-getting businessmen:

"I think if you've got a business that you are getting a nice, comfortable living out of, and you are quite happy with the way things are going and you've got a little bit put away then ... there's no need to give yourself the added stress, to go any further ... I don't want to be another Coca-Cola Schweppes or Britvic or anything ... I would suggest that 90% of people who are self-employed as such, are content with making a suitable living out of it ... not to go around in Rolls Royces and be millionaires."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

"And the family ... it certainly started off as a family lifestyle thing rather than a business. In fact I've never really been comfortable with the idea of running a business and still am not, really. I don't get a kick out of it for the sake of business, it's because of the ideas and the business is a rather tedious bit that has to be got through to make it happen."

(Baker, Cumbria)

In addition to these expressed attachments to lifestyle, rather than business-related objectives, other interviewees spoke with feeling about their sense of connection to their localities, as well as their sense of responsibility to the local workforce:

"It is difficult to reach out to places further afield geographically from where we are, but I can honestly say I would not want to work or live anywhere else ... it is a fantastic place, the quality of life here is absolutely brilliant .. and when you look at [the town] itself, being in town and not on a trading estate outside of town - although that may be appealing so we could have a brand new factory - we have inherited a building on four storeys and it's like a rabbit warren. But it is great for staff to get here, because we are bakers we start very early in the morning, it means a lot of staff can walk to work very easily , they are not having to get a bus or a taxi."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

"Some people think this [expansion on current site] is a bad idea, that we should go to the industrial estate. My point is that we do take seriously the question of what sort of economic activity is appropriate to the countryside ... Therefore for us to decamp even part of our business to an industrial estate would be to split the image and the reality and we would not be able to present the business as a whole. We would have to say there is the [village] bakery and, by the way, some of the stuff is produced on an industrial estate. Which may have its advantages, but isn't what we are about."

(Baker, Cumbria)

"I get the greatest satisfaction, and the greatest pleasure, out of offering people work. They won't become millionaires through working here, but on the other hand I like to think there's some job satisfaction, that they have a pride in what they do and also a pride in the products that they have to produce."

(Meat Processor 2, Cumbria)

Thus, from the above excerpts it may be seen that producers in this sample conveyed with conviction their attachments to their locations and workforces, in spite of any perceived commercial or financial consequences. Interestingly however, all of the above interviewees were amongst those displaying some of the most market-oriented or entrepreneurial characteristics reported in previous sections. For example, all of the above producers had pursued large retail or catering accounts, and distributed their products on a national basis. Crucially, it appears that the stated attachment to lifestyle, location or workforce rather than growth or profit-maximisation, actually co-existed with market-oriented and entrepreneurial behaviour. Indeed, as one interviewee inferred when discussing the search for new business opportunities, it may be that it is precisely *because* some producers have loyalty and commitment to certain places and people that they need to be forward-looking and opportunity-seeking to compensate:

"[The town] is a very seasonal place, we have the North Sea on one side and 20 miles of moorland all away around us. It keeps us in. Trading-wise it makes life very difficult as we only have a population of about 14,000, after the [summer tourist trade] is gone. So when you have 80 wage packets to fill each week, we have to find more ways of trying to market our products, finding new markets all the time, be it further afield of the town or abroad."

(Baker, Yorkshire)

Far from emotional attachments being associated with inward-looking, production-oriented behaviour therefore, for some interviewees these attachments appeared to provide an active stimuli for market-oriented and entrepreneurial behaviour (consistent with the findings of North and Smallbone, 1996). In addition to expressions of commitment to locations and workforces, producers in this sample also demonstrated a 'craft' mentality through expressions of heightened senses of propriety and workmanship. Already in Chapter 5 it was reported how some interviewees felt their products embodied a spirit of honesty and integrity, representative of the spirit in which the interviewees themselves conducted their affairs. This notion was reinforced in comments interviewees made about how they liked to 'do business', conveying a preference for a strong moral code:

"When you do something, if you haven't got the time to do it properly, you shouldn't do it ... there's no point in doing it half cop, it's got to be right. It's the same with the Aberdeen Angus, we are members of the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society, we get supplied through their scheme ... so we can guarantee to our customers that it is the genuine product. Because over the years, you get people who say they are selling Angus beef but you know fine well it's not. There's always somebody like that in any profession. but I like to sleep at night! You've got to have a trust between the customer and yourself, it's so important the confidence that the consumer has in you."

(Farm Shop Owner, Northumberland)

At times, interviewees recognised that such a standpoint might have negative financial implications:

"*I have a rep, but unfortunately over the last three or four years all they do is 'there's the price, beat it'. And that's really not my sort of business.*

Q: How would you describe your sort of business?

"Well we like to give a good product, and I just like to give everybody a fair whack ...we want a margin, but not an excessive margin. At Borough market, I've seen a shepherd sell a hare for £17! Even if we sold it at £15, we could say it's still less than him. But we're not into that type of business. We may be stupid, but at least we can look our customers in the face."

(Shrimp Picker, Cumbria)

However one interviewee, in expressing commitment to high quality standards in raw materials, also conveyed the fact that this standpoint did lead to commercial advantages:

"*We're the last manufacturer in the country using real lemon essence in our lemonade."*

Q: In the country?

"Yep, [the supplier], which is one of the major suppliers in the country, manufactures it especially for us."

Q: What makes someone like you continue like that when everyone else..?

"Because we've got standards. Our lemonade will outsell anything in this area. I mean people... it's yellow, see, it's yellow.... And we've recently taken on Tescos, [the local Tescos] at least have recently taken on our lemonade to sell, we're on the shelf against their own."

(Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbria)

Thus, interviewees demonstrated a 'craft' mentality by communicating adherence to certain standards of propriety in trading and workmanship in production, although the

commercial impacts of these seemed to be conveyed as being both negative, in terms of loss of revenue on individual sales, *and* positive, in terms of high standards being appealing to consumers. A final way in which producers in this sample demonstrated a craft mentality was through their accounts and perceptions of relationships with their customers and the trade. As the interviewees described the way they interacted with other individuals and organisations as part of their business, it became apparent that there was a common preference for personalised, informal relationships based on trust and shared values between the parties. Thus, the Soft Drinks Bottler, Cumbrian Cheesemaker and Northumbrian Farm Shop Owner all spoke warmly of the close, personalised relationships they had with suppliers, relating tales of how they would work together and help one another for mutual benefit, rather than engaging in formal, purely 'business-like' relationships.

At the same time however, it may be recalled from previous sections that most of the producers in this sample had actively pursued relationships with large and geographically distant firms in the supply chain, which suggests that despite their stated preferences for personalised relationships, they are willing to enter into more formal or distant interactions, and are adept at these too. The whole issue of supply chain relationships did indeed appear to be peppered with complexities and contradictions. In particular, on the question of what interviewees thought about supermarkets, some conflicting accounts and perceptions arose. At one extreme, supermarket chains were perceived as inherently damaging for local economies to the extent that supplying them was tantamount to engagement with the enemy (as expressed by the Northumbrian Bee-Keeper). For other producers, there were concerns about the focus on price over quality (the second Cumbrian Meat Processor), the uncontrollable nature of contracts (the Yorkshire Confectioner), and also the inability to establish personalised relations because of frequently shifting personnel:

"M&S are dreadful. They were very interested in [stocking the product], but the buyer, who I was getting along very well with, he was suddenly moved to the fruit section. And this is what they do."

(Meat Processor 1, Cumbria)

The above concerns, apparently derived from a 'craft' mentality towards relationships, therefore led some producers not to engage in contracts with supermarkets. For other interviewees however, engagement in these sorts of contracts was seen as 'the way forward' (as expressed by the Lancashire Cheesemaker and Cumbrian Soft Drink Bottler), necessary to achieve commercial goals, despite the acknowledged relationship problems. Finally, a set of interviewees emerged who were concerned about supplying supermarkets precisely *because* of commercial goals: namely, it was perceived that use of this distribution channel would compromise the exclusive speciality appeal of their products. Interestingly, these interviewees dealt with the problem by supplying major supermarket chains 'on the quiet', with the justification that the commercial importance of supermarket distribution was too great to avoid:

"There is a juxtaposition, which is very curious, in that people do not expect to see us in supermarkets. If they see us [there], we are devalued. They say 'this is wonderful cheese, you can't get it in the supermarket.' And yet we have been selling to the supermarkets, quietly, for almost a year off and on. We haven't made a lot of noise about it. And yet supermarkets dominate 85% of the market, so here is a serious problem for a business like this."

(Cheesemaker, Northumberland)

Thus from the above excerpts it may be seen that in spite of craft- and commercially driven concerns about supermarkets, many interviewees in this sample did use this distribution channel, albeit clandestinely in some cases. Thus, the issue of supermarket contracts brought into sharp focus the complexities involved in deducing how market-

oriented, entrepreneurial and craft mentalities co-exist for the producers in this sample. As a final illustration of this, the following excerpt from the Cumbrian Baker - in which an account is given of an incident involving a supermarket contract and mixed messages are evident in the values being portrayed - underlines the tensions between the pursuit of commercial and 'craft' goals:

"*[a major supermarket chain] pushed us into the license agreement with a bakery in Basingstoke that they would build an [identical oven to us] and do some of our product under our label, paying us a royalty. But the company which we were pushed into bed with turned out to be a very straight up and down commercial set up. They had no understanding of ethics at all, and they shafted us basically, went off with our recipes and started doing them for [the supermarket] under another label. So I hit the roof, and tried to withdraw the license agreement, but it caused a difficulty because [the supermarket] was in the middle of all this. So we ended up losing quite a lot ... a couple of years really of development and effort because I was constantly dealing with this problem.*"

(Baker, Cumbria)

What may be seen in the above account is the portrayal of 'craft'-like values of commitment to a code of propriety in production methods and business interactions (unlike the portrayal of other producer involved in the incident), combined with the entrepreneur-like pursuit of a supermarket contract which, in the interviewees' own account, was leading to the compromise of the 'craft' values (not to mention commercial problems). Overall therefore, what this section on craft mentality has shown is that the producers in this sample demonstrated attachments and commitments to the non-commercial dimensions of their livelihoods, and expressed a preference for achieving standards of workmanship and types of relationships which were also based on non-commercially driven principles. This might suggest that the producers do possess a classic 'craft' mentality driven by lifestyle or aesthetic concerns rather than business-oriented ones. However, this section has also noted that interviewees' adherence to their

'craft' principles also brought commercial advantages, and furthermore, that interviewees' stances with respect to supermarket contracts are diverse and ambiguous. Questions remain as to the nature and extent of a 'craft' mentality amongst speciality regional food producers therefore.

6.6 Discussion of Producer Accounts and Perceptions of Mentality and Behaviour

Thus far, this Chapter has presented the findings of the investigation with respect to the mentality and behaviour of speciality regional food producers. Drawing from the accounts and perceptions of the 20 interviewees in the sample, it has been found that speciality regional food producers encounter 'classic' small firm constraints of a lack of time, human and financial resources. In addition to these, they perceived difficulties in gaining access to mainstream supply chains, as well as perceiving a 'mistrust' of their processes by buyers and agents, which was seen to result in an increase in regulatory requirements. Notwithstanding these perceived problems and constraints however, strong evidence was found of classic market-oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies amongst the interviewees, both in terms of their outlooks and their activities. The strength of this finding was unexpected, and contrasts with the arguments of some authors, who contend that the characteristics of small firms make it hard for them to adopt these behaviours. Finally, evidence has been presented relating to the status of the interviewees as 'craftspersons'. In this, it was found that interviewees readily portrayed their production processes as non-industrial, although different levels of mechanisation and employment of new technologies were evident across the range of producers. In terms of a craft mentality, it was found that the interviewees expressed strong attachments to non-commercial dimensions of their work, such as location and lifestyle, over and above goals such as profit-maximisation or growth, and expressed a preference for working standards and relationships incorporating non-commercial aspects. In practice however, it was clear that some interviewees implemented practices and pursued opportunities which were primarily driven by commercial goals.

A crucial puzzle emerges from the above results. Whilst the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 suggests that there is a fundamental opposition between the mentalities of market-orientation and entrepreneurship on the one hand, and craftsmanship on the other, in the sense that small, craft-based producers are proposed to be naturally ill-disposed to market-oriented or entrepreneurial tendencies, the above results indicate that all three types of behaviour are apparent amongst speciality regional food producers. What is more, these producers are ready and keen to *portray* themselves as craft producers, qualitatively distinct from other, particularly large, industrial producers in their sector, with all the implications for differences in behaviour which that implies. How can these findings be explained? How is it possible for producers such as these to adopt apparently contradictories tendencies in their behaviour, and second, why is it that the self-perception of these producers as 'craftspersons' is so important when their achievements as market-oriented, entrepreneurial individuals are considerable? The purpose of the following sections is to find explanations for these questions. As with the development of explanations relating to perceptions of territorial distinctiveness and end product qualities in Chapter 5, the discussion which follows has been developed using the procedures of grounded theory, involving repeated scrutiny of the interviewees' accounts and perceptions, and reflection upon these with reference to the research questions.

6.6.1 Producer Mentality and Behaviour as a Function of Producer Type

An initial way to explain the co-existence of market oriented, entrepreneurial and craft behavioural tendencies within speciality regional food producers is to argue that the different tendencies are a reflection of the diversity of types of producer in the sample, rather than being simultaneously expressed within the same individual producers. In other words, it may be that the tendencies do not co-exist at all, but that some interviewees in the sample are more market-oriented or entrepreneurial, whilst others display more craft-like tendencies. To investigate this proposal further, the interviewees' accounts and perceptions - presented in a synthesised form for the purposes of this Chapter - were collected and examined for each producer in turn. Further documentary

evidence such as company literature and newspaper reports were also referred to, and together this data was examined for evidence of market-oriented, entrepreneurial or craft mentalities. A summary of the outcome of this analytical process is given in Table 6.1. Each '√' scored under the different behaviours for each producer represents, in the judgement of the researcher, the existence of this tendency as deduced from the accounts and perceptions of the interviewees themselves, or from supporting documentary evidence. Meanwhile, each '?' represents some apparent contradictions in the expression of a tendency, such that no confident assertion about its existence can be made. A blank space indicates no clear or strong expression of a tendency.

Table 6.1. Evidence of Market Oriented, Entrepreneurial and Craft Mentalities amongst Interviewees

Producer		Mkt. Orientation		Entrepreneurship			Craft Mentality		
		Mindset[1]	Acts. 2	Creativity 3	Opp-seek[4]	Indpce[5]	Attach-ments[6]	Work-manship[7]	Relation-ships[8]
Delicatessen Owner	Yorks.	√	√	√	√		√	√	
Farm Shop Owner	North.	√	√			√		√	√
Microbrewer	North.		√		√	√		√	
Soft Drinks Bottler	Cumb.	√	√		√	√		√	?
Cheesemaker	Cumb.	√				√		√	√
Meat Processor 1	Cumb.				√				
Baker	Yorks.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cheese-maker 1	Yorks.	√	√	√	√				
Confectioner	Yorks.	√	√		√		√	√	?
Fresh Produce Pcr	North.	√	√		√		√		
Shrimp Picker	Lancs.				√	√	√	√	√
Cheese-maker 2	Yorks.	√	√		√	√	√	√	?
Cheese-maker	Lancs.	√		√	√			√	
Cheese-maker	North.	√		√	√			√	?
Fish Smoker	North.	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
Bee-Keeper	North.			√	√	√	√	√	√
Shrimp Picker	Cumb.	√			√		?	√	?
Microbrewer	Yorks.	√		√	√	?	√	√	
Baker	Cumb.	√			√	?	√	√	?
Meat Processor 2	Cumb.	√	√		√	√	√	√	√

[1] The mindset of market orientation: for example, a long-term, strategic perspective.
[2] The activities of market orientation: in particular, research and communications.
[3] Creativity and imagination, for example, in product and service decisions.
[4] Disposition towards seeking out new business opportunities.
[5] Desire for independence and control in running the firm.
[6] Attachments and sense of responsibility to firm, workforce, and/or location.
[7] Sense of propriety with respect to production standards and quality.
[8] Sense of propriety with respect to trade and customer relationships.

Although somewhat crude and subjective in nature, what Table 6.1 demonstrates is that for most interviewees in the sample, dimensions of all three behaviours were apparent in their accounts and perceptions, or in supporting literature. Rather than the existence of a pattern of mutual exclusivity between the behaviours therefore, it does indeed appear that market oriented, entrepreneurial and craft tendencies co-exist in the expressions of these producers. Furthermore, behavioural tendencies do not appear to be related to interviewee profile factors: that is, the same diverse, multifaceted expressions of behaviour exist, irrespective of producer location, size, age or product type. Therefore, the co-existance of apparently contradictory behaviours in speciality regional food producers cannot be satisfactorily explained by producer type or profile.

6.6.2 Producer Mentality and Behaviour as a Constructed Meaning

An alternative way of explaining the existence of contrasting behaviours amongst speciality regional food producers is by viewing them as sets of meanings constructed by interviewees designed to achieve a particular purpose. Thus, representations of market-oriented, entrepreneurial and craft-like behaviours are invoked by the interviewees in an effort to make sense of who they are and how they act, and to arrive at a 'portrayal' of themselves to the outside world which they are comfortable with. This may be a useful way of explaining the multifaceted nature of speciality food producer behaviour. Essentially what may be happening is that producers are selecting variously from market-oriented, entrepreneurial and craft behaviour 'languages' to rationalise, or give sense to decisions which they have made or standpoints that they have. If this process is repeated over the course of an in-depth interview, multiple meanings are bound to emerge.

Thus over the course of the interview discussions, producers would cite instances where they had taken a stance of not wanting to pursue a particular opportunity, or enter a particular market, or grow beyond a certain size. In these cases, the craft 'language' of desire to retain control, or stay true to one's roots, or maintain loyalty to existing suppliers or distributors, or maintain standards of workmanship or interaction, was

invoked. For example, both the Cumbrian Baker and the Northumbrian Fish Smoker spoke of their loyalties to their premises and workforce, as well as to the heritage and 'spirit' of their enterprises, in support of their stances of not wanting to move to commercially more advantageous locations (such as a nearby industrial estate). However at other points in the interviews, where producers had decided to pursue the securing of a contract with a big distributor or geographically distant supplier, or increase their level of mechanisation or use of new technology, market-oriented or entrepreneurial 'language' provided the supporting rationales, via expressions of the need for viability in a competitive market, efficiency in the face of cost and financial concerns, or the need for product improvements to enhance quality, safety or consumer satisfaction. These kinds of arguments were invoked by the same Baker and Fish Smoker mentioned above, to support more 'expansionist' stances which they had taken at other points in the firm's recent history. Therefore, this explanation of producer behaviour conceives of speciality regional food producers as 'free agents' adopting different stances in response to each individual problem or issue that they face as small business managers. Whatever decision is taken in response to a problem or issue, the market-oriented, entrepreneurial or craft 'language' may be used to post-rationalise that decision, depending on which is the most appropriate. In this way, speciality regional food producers are viewed as being really no different to any other small firm where a manager has desires to achieve commercial goals, but has attachments to, and stances on, the non-commercial dimensions of his or her livelihood as well.

The concept of expressions of behaviour as sets of constructed meanings explains some of the contrasts and self-contradictions in interviewee accounts and perceptions of behaviour. For example, the ambiguous stance of the Northumbrian and Yorkshire Cheesemakers towards supplying supermarkets - simultaneously criticising them from a moral and relationship point of view, whilst actively supplying them 'on the quiet' - may be explained as the outcome of craft mentalities butting up against the perceived need to retain the commercial viability of the business. However, examination of interviewee

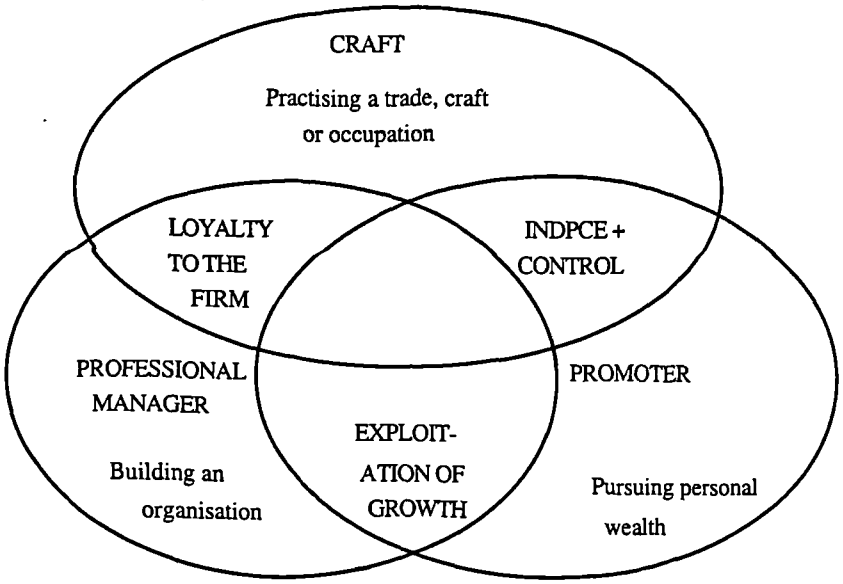
accounts of their behaviour suggests that there is more going on than the rather random, indiscriminate appropriation of certain 'languages' in order to justify individual decisions. Rather, throughout this Chapter, it seems that a more sustained pattern of behaviour and expression of mentality can be observed, which underlies the individual permutations. This is the observation mentioned previously that the producers in this sample tended to be strongly market-oriented and entrepreneurial in their behaviour, yet also showed themselves to be keen to *perceive* and *portray* themselves as craftspersons, with all the differences in processes, mentality and outlook which this implies. The concept of expressions of behaviour as constructed meanings doesn't quite explain this sustained pattern. To find a more satisfactory explanation, the concept of behaviour as a constructed meaning is combined with the notion of placing the interviewees' accounts of their behaviour into the immediate context and circumstances in which they found themselves. This approach is the subject of the following section.

6.6.3 Producer Mentality and Behaviour as a Function of Immediate Contexts and Circumstances

To elaborate this explanation, literature in Chapter 3 is returned to, in particular, the work of Hornaday (1990), who developed a schematic theory of behavioural tendencies amongst small firm owners (Figure 3.2, reproduced below). In this theory, three types of small business owner - the 'promoter', the 'professional manager' and the 'craft' owner - are delineated, based on the distinctive sources of fulfilment and satisfaction which each type seeks. Thus, promoters, as classic entrepreneurial types, seek satisfaction from the pursuit of personal wealth; professional managers gain fulfilment from building and organisation; and craft owners derive satisfaction from being involved in a trade or occupation which they enjoy. It is the intentions of the individual owners which explain their place in the scheme. Crucially however, the scheme identifies overlaps which exist between the three different types of small business owner, with promoters and craft owners sharing a desire for independence and control, promoters and professional managers being disposed towards exploitation of growth, and professional

managers and craft owners sharing a sense of loyalty to the firm or occupation. The central section of the scheme, where all three business owner types overlap, is 'blanked out'.

Figure 3.2 Three Types of Small Business Owner



Source: Hornaday, 1990.

This scheme was reflected upon in light of the results of the investigation regarding producer behaviour. From scrutiny of the interviewees' accounts and perceptions of their behaviour, it would appear that the strength they displayed in market-oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies, seeking out new opportunities and exploiting growth, would place many speciality food producers in the 'promoter' section of the scheme. In addition, some interviewees spoke of the satisfaction and pride they took in offering employment to the local workforce, which in some cases represented up to 80 jobs. Tendencies of the professional manager seemed to be apparent therefore. This would lead to the conclusion that many of the producers in this sample would 'belong' in the lower sections of this scheme. But what of the keen-ness of interviewees to stress their sense of attachment to their trade or occupation, and communicate strong feelings about retaining independence and control? This would lead to the proposition that either producers have tendencies which in practice are more promoter/professional manager-

like, but they perceive themselves as having craft tendencies, or that the producers in this sample actually 'inhabit' the central section of the scheme, being driven by all three types of tendency. Both these propositions may be explained with reference to the immediate, competitive, context of the producers.

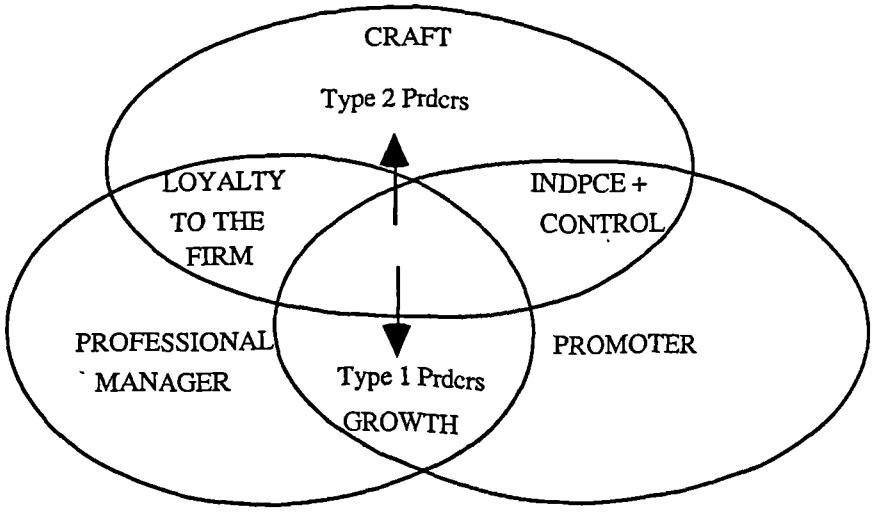
First the proposition that speciality food producers perceive and portray themselves as having craft-like tendencies, although in practice, their behaviour points towards more classically entrepreneurial, or marketing manager tendencies. Given that the interviewees concerned, because of their commercial astuteness, were aware of their market and competitive position, it could be that portrayal of themselves as craftspersons - in terms of both processes and mentalities - is a useful source of competitive advantage to them as they operate in sectors dominated by larger, more industrialised firms. To be a craftsperson, with all the dimensions of manual labour, technical skills and intuitive processes this implies, in addition to the connotations of honesty and integrity in working practices and relationships, is to be distinctive and differentiated in an otherwise de-personalised, machine and technology-driven sector. Irrespective of the actual judgement calls which these producers make with respect to firm size or growth rates, or trade-offs between manual processes and technology or between engagement with the local community and the pursuit of lucrative, though distant, supply chain contracts, it is commercially astute to portray the firm as operating on a set of principles which suggest that those calls are always made on the side of a 'craft' rather than a 'non-craft' mentality. This is not to say that the producers in this sample, through their accounts and perceptions, were deliberately and cynically painting a mis-representative picture of their mentalities and goals. As much evidence reported in earlier sections of this Chapter has shown, the producers in this sample did choose to avoid certain growth opportunities or contracts, on the basis of 'craft' rationales. However, in terms of explaining why these market-oriented, entrepreneurial producers were so keen to portray themselves as craftspersons, this notion of craft as a commercially advantageous attribute is quite persuasive.

The notion of craft as commercially advantageous may also be used to explain the alternative proposal regarding the results. That is, that the producers in this sample, rather than 'saying one thing and doing another', are in fact expressing an essential combination of all three types of tendency in the Hornaday scheme: promoter, professional manager *and* craft. On the face of it, this proposal appears puzzling: indeed, the scheme does not acknowledge the possibility of overlap of all three tendencies. However, it may be argued that if a small firm owner is in a market where consumers perceive a special value in products from producers who behave like craftspersons, and differentiate between them and non-craft producers, then there can be an harmonious overlap between all three types of behaviour. Dogged adherence to aesthetic or lifestyle goals, or to certain types of production method or distribution channel need not be at odds with the meeting of 'promoter' or 'professional manager' goals when these craft characteristics provide the source of attractiveness of the firm's products, and therefore its potential for wealth creation and growth. In the right markets therefore, a combination of the promoter's desire to identify and reach market opportunities, and the professional manager's *nous* in conducting business affairs, together with the craft owners deterministic principles is an harmonious and potent mix of tendencies, which offers opportunities for achieving both commercial and non-commercial goals.

Crucially, the nature of the markets in which the interviewees in this sample operated, by their own recognition, tended to be conducive to an harmonious overlap: that is, they were perceived to be dominated by large-scale industrial suppliers, which meant that being 'craft' was to be differentiated. In addition, many of the interviewees perceived that their markets were buoyant, with demand outstripping supply of their products and much potential for further growth. Interviewees were therefore in the position of being able to select distribution channels or production methods which accorded with their craft sensibilities. The potential for tension between meeting the needs of the market and producing the product the way they wanted had not arisen.

If the multiciplous nature of speciality food producer behaviour can be explained by the nature and dynamic of the markets they operate in, allowing market-oriented, entrepreneurial and craft tendencies to co-exist harmoniously, the question arises as to what would happen if the nature or dynamic of the market changed. In other words, what would happen if demand for these producers' products stagnated or more craft-based competitors entered the market? What would happen if consumer valuing of 'craft' appeals dissipated in favour of other dimensions? In these circumstances, it is proposed that from their position in the 'central' section of the Hornaday scheme, the behaviour or goals of speciality food producers would move in one of two directions (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Small Firm Behaviour under Adverse Market Conditions



Source: adapted from Hornaday, 1990.

First, some producers may take the decision that they are primarily satisfied by being commercially successful small business managers, exploiting growth opportunities and building professional organisations (Type 1 producers). Under the above-mentioned market conditions, achievement of these goals might necessitate modifications to production processes (e.g. more mechanisation), adjustments to product mixes (e.g. sourcing non-traditional ingredients) or changes in distribution (e.g. engagement in supermarket contracts). In other words, these producers would experience a compromising of their craft sensibilities, moving to the lower sections of the Hornaday

scheme. Another set of producers may take the decision that they are primarily satisfied by their occupation in a craft-based lifestyle activity, where achievement of standards of propriety in working practices and relationships cannot be compromised (Type 2 producers). Such producers would therefore 'retreat' to the craft section of the Hornaday scheme, principles intact but facing the danger of commercial non-viability through the lack of pursuit of growth opportunities and desire for wealth creation. In other words, the argument is that where market conditions are such that no commercial value is derived from being a craftsman, the promoter, professional manager and craft owner tendencies are no longer harmonious or moving towards complementary goals, thus a producer would move to one of the 'extremity' sections of the scheme.

Under this final explanation therefore, the behavioural tendencies of speciality regional food producers is conceived of as a function of their market and competitive circumstances: in buoyant markets where craft products are valued by consumers, speciality regional food producers display a mix of market-oriented, entrepreneurial and craft-like tendencies which are mutually harmonious. However in stagnant markets or situations of intense, direct competition, these producers either compromise their craft sensibilities, becoming akin to any non-craft, commercially driven small enterprise, or else they effectively become 'pure' craftsmen, staying true to their principles and letting go of their market-oriented, entrepreneurial tendencies.

6.7 Summary

This Chapter has reported the findings of the primary component of this investigation with respect to speciality regional food producers, by drawing from the relevant accounts and perceptions of 20 interviewees. Having set out the main question to be investigated, namely, the nature and style of speciality regional food producer behaviour, the Chapter first identified that the producers in the sample experienced classic small firm problems of a lack of resources, but perceived additional disadvantages through difficulties in gaining

access to the supply chain and also increased regulatory requirements linked to a perceived mistrust of their processes by mainstream operators.

In terms of evidence relating to their actual behaviour, the Chapter proceeded by reporting this, in synthesised form, under the headings of 'market orientation', 'entrepreneurship' and 'craft' mentalities. The main finding was that most of the interviewees demonstrated strong and adept market oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies, whilst also expressing firm commitment to 'craft' ideals. Behavioural tendencies were not related to the type, size or age of interviewees' firms, but were genuinely multiciplous within the vast majority of producers. Following discussion of the concept of expressions of behaviour as constructed meanings, the multiciplous nature of producer behaviour was explained as a function of market conditions and competitive circumstances. That is, where craft methods and mentality have market value, it is proposed that market-oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies can co-exist harmoniously with craft sensibilities. However in adverse market conditions, it was proposed that the harmonious overlap splits, and producers either become commercially driven, non-craft small firms, or non-commercial craftsmen. Having reported and discussed the main findings of the primary research with respect to speciality regional food products and producers, the final Chapter of the thesis goes on to summarise and draw the main conclusions for the whole investigation.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has comprised an investigation of speciality regional foods in the UK today, examining and explaining the nature and meaning of such foods by placing them within a social historical context and by relating *them to the mentalities and decisions of the producers* who bring them to the marketplace. In the course of the preceding Chapters, the subject matter of the investigation has been introduced and discussed, and the methods and results have been reported of an empirical study of 20 speciality regional food producers in the north of England. From the latter Chapters, it is possible to identify the emergence of some answers to the key research questions set out at the start of the thesis. The purpose of this Chapter is to now draw together explicitly the main findings of the investigation with respect to the original research questions, and to consider carefully the practical and theoretical implications which arise. To do this, the Chapter proceeds as follows. First, a reminder is given of the starting point and policy context of the investigation, culminating in a restatement of the key research questions which have been referred to throughout the thesis. Next, a report is given of the investigation's main findings with respect to speciality regional food products, focusing on what can be concluded about their nature and meaning, and the implications of these in terms of policy support mechanisms. A similar section then follows for speciality regional food producers, drawing out the key conclusions of the research with respect to the profile and behaviour of these producers, and again contemplating the policy implications. Finally, the Chapter concludes with some closing reflections on the theoretical insights arising from this study, together with some thoughts on fruitful avenues for future research.

7.2 The Study in Context: a Recapitulation

The starting point for this investigation was the observation that speciality regional foods - broadly defined as those foods with special or unique characteristics related to territory - are growing in popularity and that they have an increasingly important economic contribution to make within the food industry. Twinned with this observation of a growth in market status was the identification of policy initiatives - in particular, the schemes administered by Food From Britain (Speciality Food Groups), the Countryside Agency ('Eat the View') and MAFF (Protected Designations of Origin/Geographical Indicator) - which specifically target speciality regional foods with the provision of support and resources. This targeting is based on policy-makers' perceptions that speciality or local food production has the potential to offer significant economic, socio-cultural and/or ecological benefits, but that producers need assistance to realise these because of their disadvantaged and/or vulnerable status in the economy (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Policy Initiatives for Speciality Regional Foods: Objectives and Rationales

Initiative	Key Objectives	Rationale
Regional Speciality Food Groups, administered by Food From Britain.	Acting on behalf of fee-paying members, Groups offer networking facilities, advice and resources to enhance the commercial growth opportunities for speciality food firms.	Speciality food firms are conceived of as important value-adding contributors to the UK food and drink sector. Policy support therefore needs to encourage the start up and growth of such firms.
Eat the View, administered by the Countryside Agency.	Working with other bodies where appropriate, a programme of support, advice and assistance is offered to producers of 'local' products, to encourage them to maintain and develop the ecological and social dimensions of their activities.	Consumers are increasingly demanding local, sustainably produced foods with clearly traceable origins, therefore to achieve sustainability objectives, policy support needs to encourage firms to produce such foods, and make these products more accessible to end consumers.
Protected Designations of Origin and Geographical Indicator, administered by MAFF.	A patenting device of product names is employed to protect producers of geographically distinctive foods from unscrupulous competition.	Production of speciality regional foods has socio-economic significance to rural areas but producers are vulnerable in the face of free-market competition. Policy support can assist such producers by offering guarantees of product authenticity to consumers.

Yet policy-makers' premises about the nature of speciality regional food products and producers were identified as requiring further investigation, particularly in light of anecdotal evidence which suggested that the speciality regional food 'sector' is, in practice, made up of a highly diverse and heterogeneous range of products and producers, with varying capacities for contributing to policy objectives. Wider issues were also raised relating to the characterisation of phenomena such as speciality regional foods, as well as to the behavioural processes of the producers of these foods. As a result, the following key research questions were set out for this investigation:

1. *What are speciality regional foods?*

In the light of a lack of in-depth studies of these foods, and the assumptions made by policy-makers with respect to their significance and value, this research first set out to investigate the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK today. Within this broad area of inquiry, two more specific questions were addressed, namely:

(i) *How is territorial distinctiveness bestowed on foods?*

That is, an investigation was needed of the ways in which geography or territory influences the nature of foods, rendering them 'regional specialities';

(ii) *What end qualities do speciality regional foods possess?*

That is, an investigation was needed of the ways in which speciality regional foods are distinctive or different from other food products, with examination of the end qualities through which such distinction is conveyed.

2. *Who are speciality regional food producers?*

In the light of scant information regarding the profile and activities of speciality regional food producers, and the assumptions made by policy-makers regarding the value of their production methods and the nature of their aptitudes and inclinations, this research also set out to investigate the characteristics and behaviour of these producers, focusing specifically on two questions:

(i) *What is the nature of speciality regional food production?*

That is, an investigation was needed of the types of methods and processes employed in the production of these foods, with a view to ascertaining the extent to which they are craft-based;

(ii) *What is the mentality and behaviour of speciality regional food producers?*

That is, an investigation was needed of how such producers think and act with respect to their enterprises and livelihoods, with a view to understanding their aptitudes, inclinations and perceptions of the purposes and goals which underpin their behaviour.

Having set out these questions, the investigation then proceeded with a review of relevant literature relating to the above topics, drawing from studies in the fields of sociology (both social historical studies of foods as well as sociological studies of craft producers), anthropology, marketing, small business and entrepreneurship. The methods and results were then reported relating to the empirical component of the investigation. Overall, what can be concluded from this study with respect to the above research questions?

7.3 Conclusions Relating to the Nature and Meaning of Speciality Regional Foods

7.3.1 Territorial Distinctiveness in Food Products

First, from the literature review, it was identified that foods may become territorially distinctive through two influences, geophysical and human, with geophysical influences being bestowed through the impact of factors such as climate, topography and soil type on the nature and abundance of raw materials in an area, and human influences being bestowed through the development of customs or traditions of food production and processing within an area. However, the literature review identified that these influences are not 'fixed' in time and space; instead they are subject to a number of macro-environmental forces which, for example, alter the availability of raw materials within an area or change the way in which processing techniques are carried out. In relation to the UK, the key macro-environmental forces were identified as international trade, population migrations, organisation of social hierarchies, industrialisation and agricultural policy. Of these, industrialisation was identified as a particularly complex force, on the one hand representing the destruction of the peasant type of production associated with speciality regional foods, whilst on the other heralding an era of branding and quality specification of goods.

What can be concluded from the literature review therefore is that territorial distinctiveness in foods is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. Even if the 'essence' of territorially distinctive foods can be determined, in principle, through the identification of geophysical and human facets within a product, so many complex forces have impacted on these facets over time that the judgement as to their existence in a particular product becomes very problematic. This conclusion is reinforced by the findings of the primary research. Amongst the products offered by the sample of 20 speciality regional food producers, a huge variety of types were found, all with different levels of veracity with respect to geophysical and human

facets of territorial distinctiveness. Thus, at one extreme, there were those products made almost entirely from locally sourced ingredients and which were made through a specified, historically accurate recipe. At the other extreme were those products made from little or no locally sourced ingredients, and which were based on new or novel recipes. In between these extremes, lots of shades of grey emerged. Furthermore, producers themselves conveyed different levels of conviction regarding the territorial distinctiveness of their products, with some being quite vehement and others rather dismissive about this aspect. The extent of a producer's conviction, moreover, appeared to be related less to the essential level of typicity in his or her product, and more to the degree of perceived direct competition he or she faced from other, similar, producers. Overall therefore, the final conclusion from this part of the study is that territorial distinctiveness is an essential characteristic of food products derived from geophysical and human facets, though the actual extent of the existence of these in present day UK products is variable, and that speciality regional food producers themselves perceive territorial distinctiveness both as a precious essential characteristic not to be tampered with but also an imagined quality useful as an adjustable or malleable marketing or competitive tool.

7.3.2 End Qualities of Speciality Regional Foods

If the territorial distinctiveness of speciality regional foods can indeed be thought of as an imaginary as well as an essential phenomenon, then what can be concluded from the research about the nature of this imaginary dimension? What end qualities and intangible benefits do speciality regional foods offer which make them different to or distinct from other food products? From the literature review, a number of qualities were proposed, namely: 'rusticity'; 'gourmet'; 'naturalness'; 'tradition', and 'symbols of local pride'. The existence of these qualities, in practice, was confirmed though the primary research via a process of scrutiny of packaging and promotional materials for the products in the sample, as well as analysis of producer descriptions and conceptualisations of these products. However, the

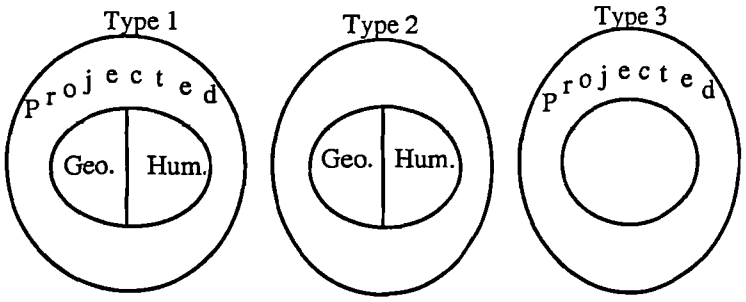
primary research also found that different combinations of the above appeals, as well as different extents of the same appeal, were apparent across the range of products in the sample. Another intriguing finding was that some speciality regional food products conveyed both rustic *and* gourmet appeals simultaneously, qualities which would appear to be the opposite of one another. This was explained with reference to the sociological literature, identifying that in present UK culinary culture (influenced as it is by a French perspective) foods derived from rustic, pre-industrial peasant contexts tend to be highly prized as gourmet items. Overall in terms of the end qualities of speciality regional foods therefore, it may be concluded that some of these products possess appeals no different to other types of food, in the sense that other types of food can communicate naturalness or rusticity or a gourmet quality. However, it is the special *combination* of the above appeals, which allude to associations with specific geographical origins or traditions, that makes a speciality regional food product distinctive and therefore different from other types of food product.

7.3.3 Essential and Projected Levels of Territorial Distinctiveness in Speciality Regional Foods

Thus, this study has found that in terms of the nature and meaning of speciality regional food products, it is the dimension of territorial distinctiveness which distinguishes and characterises such products. In turn, this dimension can exist both at an 'essential' level in a product (where the distinctive characteristics of the product are due to local geophysical and human factors), and also at an imaginary or projected level (where distinctive characteristics are due to intangible end product qualities, communicated through packaging, symbolism, etc.). However this study found that, in practice, there are wide variations in the degree to which speciality regional foods in the UK today possess essential territorial distinctiveness. Similarly, there are different degrees and types of projected territorial distinctiveness.

Consolidating these findings, it may be concluded that three distinct types of speciality regional food exist in the UK today (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 A Classification of Products on the Basis of Essential and Projected Dimensions of Typicity



First, it is possible to identify that some food products popularly perceived as regional specialities have both essential *and* projected dimensions of typicity (Type 1 in Figure 7.1). Thus, at the essential level, they may be made with raw materials sourced locally, lending them geophysical facets of territorial distinctiveness, or they may be made using methods with historic traditions attached, therefore lending them human facets of typicity. At the projected level, such products also communicate an appropriate mix of qualities and appeals through their packaging and promotional materials, such that they can be clearly identified as regional specialities. According to this 'two level' perspective, a second set of food products may be distinguished, which possess the same essential facets of typicity as the first set, but which do not communicate the same combination of end product qualities and appeals (Type 2 products). This may be because the packaging does not strike the right balance between 'rusticity' and 'gourmet', or the product's traditional and territorially distinctive characteristics are not conveyed clearly. Finally, a third set of products may be identified whose characteristics are the inverse of the previous set: that is, they *project* that they are regional specialities through an appropriate mix of appeals in the end product, but do not possess the same veracious essential facets of typicity as products in the other two sets (Type 3 products). This 'two level' classification provides a useful basis for considering the policy

implications of this study's findings relating to the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods.

7.4 Policy Implications of Conclusions Relating to Speciality Regional Food Products

To discuss the policy implications of conclusions relating to speciality regional food products, the national scale initiatives introduced in Chapter 1 are returned to, that is, the Regional Speciality Food Groups administered by Food From Britain, the Countryside Agency's Eat the View initiative, and the PDO/PGI scheme administered by MAFF. Each one of these initiatives has a means of 'defining' what a regional or local product is, so that the desired type of products are captured within the scheme. Assumptions are therefore being made by each initiative as to what territorial distinctiveness is in a food product, and what this means in terms of policy relevant benefits. The findings of the current study, as summed up in Figure 7.1, lead to propositions about these definitions and assumptions. Thus, it may be argued that Food From Britain aims to encapsulate Type 1 and Type 3 products within its scheme: those which have, at least, a clear projected level of typicity. This is on the basis that this scheme values territorial distinctiveness in foods for the speciality, added value, end product qualities which are associated with it, allowing such products to command a premium in a potentially global marketplace. In contrast, it may be argued that the Countryside Agency would target Type 1 and Type 2 products under the Eat the View initiative: that is, those products with at least essential facets of typicity. This is because for the Countryside Agency, the value of regional specialities is in their status as local products drawing from local ingredients and historic, sustainable land management practices. Assistance may given to ensure that supported products communicate attractive, marketable end qualities, but such end qualities are not a pre-requisite for inclusion in the scheme. Finally, the PDO/PGI initiative also aims quite explicitly to capture products with at least essential facets of typicity (Type 1 and Type 2 products), on the basis that such products

are assumed to derive from worthy small-scale, pre-industrial production practices sited in disadvantaged rural areas.

If Figure 7.1 provides a means of interpreting how key UK policy initiatives characterise territorial distinctiveness in foods, what implications are there for these initiatives from the results of this study relating to the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods? To discuss these implications, reference is made to the study's two key findings on speciality regional food products: (i) that in practice quite different degrees of essential territorial distinctiveness exist in speciality regional foods in the UK today, and (ii) that end product qualities, at the projected level of territorial distinctiveness, also show wide variation, with the potential for conflicting messages about product attributes (e.g. rusticity and gourmet).

7.4.1 Classification and Characterisation Issues

First, the variation in the degrees of essential territorial distinctiveness in products has implications for initiatives such as Eat the View and PDO/PGI, because it implies the need for vigilance and careful discrimination on the part of scheme administrators to ensure that only those products which *do* have the essential, policy beneficial facets are included in the scheme (e.g. use of local ingredients; culturally significant, highly skilled and/or labour intensive methods; ecologically sustainable production practices). If, as it has been discovered in this study, some speciality regional foods - even those with particular renown - employ practices such as the use of non-local ingredients or mechanised processes, then it is presumably unlikely that support of such products will achieve the wider policy objectives assumed of them. Thus, scheme implementers need to go beyond face value acceptance of products as regional specialities at the projected level, and scrutinise procurement and production realities at the essential level. This has considerable implications for the time and resources needed on the part of those administering these schemes. What is more, it is unlikely that following such scrutiny, any one product will possess all of the desired aspects

of essential territorial distinctiveness (for example, a real ale product may be made employing historic, hand-crafted techniques, but using imported hops). Therefore, scheme co-ordinators need to consider carefully the 'baseline' criteria for inclusion of products in a scheme, and be clear on where compromises or trade-offs can be made. Such careful consideration would be essential to avoid confusion and frustration on the part of the businesses producing the relevant products, on whose co-operation the overall success of the scheme depends.

7.4.2 Branding Issues

Second, the findings regarding the diverse, and potentially conflicting nature of speciality regional food end product qualities has implications for all initiatives, given that they employ a branding mechanism to achieve their objectives. This point can be illustrated with reference to the Food From Britain scheme. In this scheme, individual regional speciality products are 'showcased' under umbrella brand names with regional or territorial associations. As has been argued previously, the subtext of these brands is that the products offered within them are up-market, value-added gourmet specialities. Yet this research has found that in practice, not all speciality regional foods do have 'gourmet' end qualities: in some cases, their attractiveness is in their simplicity, rusticity or naturalness. What co-ordinators such as those in the Speciality Food Groups face therefore is an issue of mismatch between the images of products projected at the umbrella brand level and those at the individual product level. Such a mismatch would be undesirable given the need for branding images to convey consistent and harmonious appeals to end consumers. Scheme co-ordinators therefore need to consider carefully what end qualities they want to communicate in their umbrella brands and identify potential areas of mismatch. Where mismatches *are* identified between umbrella brand values and individual products, co-ordinators must then choose between excluding these products from the scheme (which may risk alienating those businesses perhaps most in need of

marketing support and assistance), and persuading businesses to alter the projected levels of their products (which may risk losing existing customers for that business).

7.4.3 Co-ordination Issues

There is a final policy relevant conclusion to be drawn from this study's findings on the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods. At a basic level, this study has found that the nature of speciality regional foods is varied and that end products are open to multiple meanings. Thus, for example, speciality regional foods may be minimally packaged organic breads made from craft techniques but imported wheat; they may be flavoursome, value-added cheeses employing locally procured milk; or they may be historic confections using very simple ingredients but packaged in a highly up-market, gourmet style. With this variety, it is easy to see how different development agencies want to target what may loosely be described as speciality regional foods, all under rather different conceptualisations and auspices. All may have validity, but the problem with this multiplicity of policies, agencies and initiatives is the potential for confusion in the marketplace. Consumers are not only faced with a variety of types of regional speciality, with different degrees of essential veracity and projected end qualities, they now also face a barrage of 'super-brands', all promoting and guaranteeing slightly different production realities and end product qualities in regional foods. Thus, consumers face the prospect of discovering that some regional specialities are only showcased or made available through certain schemes, or that confusing overlaps appear across a variety of schemes. Against this background, it is debatable whether consumer choice will be helpfully informed by a proliferation of schemes and brands. Producers too may find the options open to them for showcasing their products too diverse, and may resist registering with some schemes for fear of sending out conflicting messages about their products to consumers. Overall therefore, a rationalisation of the total volume of schemes is desirable, with a need for greater clarity and co-ordination between the principle, national-scale initiatives to reduce the risk of confusion.

7.5 Conclusions Relating to the Profile and Behaviour of Speciality Regional Food Producers

Having set out the main conclusions of the research with respect to speciality regional food products, the Chapter now continues with the conclusions relating to the producers of these products. These are presented in two sections: first, those relating to the profile of speciality regional food producers, and second, those relating to the mentality and behaviour of these producers.

7.5.1 The Profile of Speciality Regional Food Producers

Some intriguing results arose from this research with respect to the profile and characteristics of speciality regional food producers. First, from the small number of previous studies identified in the literature, it was found that speciality regional food producers are generally small in size (over two-thirds at least having 10 employees or less), have limited turnover, and employ some degree of hand-crafted methods in their production. These characteristics are broadly consistent with the notions of speciality regional food producers proposed in policy documentation. The empirical component of this investigation, too, found that amongst the 20 firms included in the sample, all were small in size (following the official EU definition of 'having less than 100 employees') and hand-crafted methods did tend to be a feature of their production processes. Within this general characterisation however, much variation in producer profiles was found. For example, the size of firms stretched from companies with over 70 employees, to microbusinesses employing less than 10 workers, to self-employed individuals. Producers in the sample also varied according to type, from recently started partnerships to third and fourth generation family firms, from new ventures funded by outside investors to established farm businesses engaging in on-site diversifications. Overall therefore, an initial conclusion from the research is that the speciality regional food sector is characterised by much variation in the type and profile of individual firms.

In terms of the employment of craft methods, there was also much variation to be found. First, from the literature review, it was identified that the whole concept of 'craft' is highly complex, craft production having evolved through a series of different historic eras, from the hierarchically organised workshop settings of the medieval period, to the aesthetic 'split' between art and craft of the Renaissance, to the crisis period of the Industrial Revolution and the gradual blurring of the boundaries between art, craft and industry in the 20th Century. All of this literature suggested that contemporary craft production of any item, including food products, is likely to incorporate some artistic and industrial dimensions. In practice, this suggestion was borne out in the results of the primary research. From producer accounts of the processes that they employed, some degrees of 'industrialisation' were apparent, for example, in the use of certain mechanised techniques or in the application of new technologies. Strikingly however - even amongst producers with relatively high levels of industrialisation - the importance of hand-crafted elements to the character of end products tended to be emphasised, with producers speaking positively and passionately about their use of hard manual labour, learned acquired skills and use of qualitative judgements. Artistry in the production process was also conveyed through comments relating to freedom of expression, employment of intuition and derivation of aesthetic pleasure in the production process. Overall therefore, it may be concluded that although speciality regional food production appears to involve a degree of craft-based methods, which producers themselves are keen to emphasise the importance of, elements of 'industry' and 'artistry' are also apparent.

7.5.2 The Mentality and Behaviour of Speciality Regional Food Producers

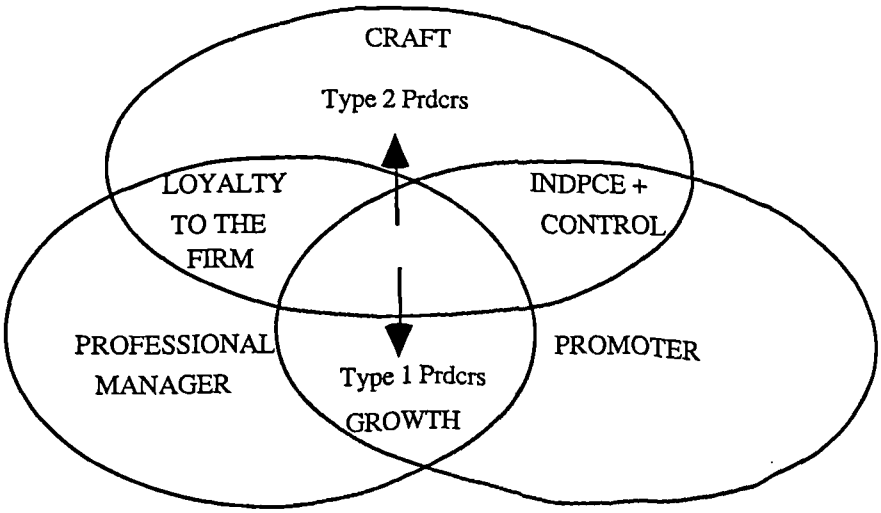
Having identified that the profile of speciality regional food producers is highly varied, and that different degrees of craft methods are apparent in their production processes, it may be assumed that the mentality and behaviour of these producers is similarly differentiated. To inform this part of the investigation, literature was drawn from the fields of marketing, small

business and entrepreneurship, as well as from sociological studies of craft producers. Essentially what was proposed from this was that, notwithstanding the identification of a 'pragmatic' craftsperson by some sociological studies, small craft producers are unlikely to be disposed neither to market oriented, nor entrepreneurial behaviour because they possess a production-focused, lifestyle-oriented mentality, in addition to problems of limited resources. Contrary to the expectations set up in the literature however, the primary component of this investigation found consistent and compelling evidence of strong market-oriented and entrepreneurial tendencies amongst the producers in the sample. Thus, producers demonstrated an ability to perceive the competitive and market position of their products, and to think in strategic terms; they showed an aptitude for spotting new opportunities and revealed a willingness and determination to pursue large accounts and geographically distant markets. Furthermore, despite their self-perceived weaknesses in relation to market-oriented or entrepreneurial activities, it was found that they did execute activities of this sort, although these tended to be on their own, informal, terms, rather than in an orthodox, textbook fashion.

These findings might have led to the conclusion that speciality regional food producers, contrary to expectations, are ambitious, outward-looking, growth-oriented private enterprises no different to any other small firm producing food products or other marketable item. At the same time however, elements of a 'craft' mentality (that is, lifestyle-oriented, product deterministic and non-growth oriented) *were* found amongst the producers in the primary research, which led to the 'closing off' of some potentially lucrative avenues. It was concluded therefore, that rather than being exclusively market-oriented, entrepreneurial or craft-like in behaviour, speciality regional food producers constantly strike a balance between commercial and craft goals, leading to elements of all three mentalities being demonstrated within the same individual.

However a final result from this part of the research could not be satisfactorily explained in this way. Namely, that there appeared to be a sustained tendency amongst the producers in the sample to demonstrate keen-ness to *portray* themselves as having a craft mentality, whilst displaying, in practice, highly market-oriented and entrepreneurial behaviour. This finding was explained with reference to the framework of Hornaday (Figure 6.1, reproduced below), with the proposal that because in current market circumstances the portrayal of oneself as 'craft' gives commercial advantage, there is an harmonious overlap between the stated pursuit of deterministic, lifestyle-oriented craft goals, and the execution of market-oriented and entrepreneurial behaviours related to quite contrasting types of goals. However, if demand stagnates, or being craft no longer holds the attractive differentiation it once did, then producers cannot pursue all three goals harmoniously. Either they will become 'pure' craft producers, abandoning the market-orientation and entrepreneurial tendencies (Type 2 producers), or they will decide that they wish to pursue the latter types of goals, and therefore lose their 'craft' mentality (Type 1 producers).

Figure 6.1 Small Firm Behaviour under Adverse Market Conditions



Source: adapted from Hornaday, 1990

7.6 Policy Implications of Conclusions Relating to Speciality Regional Food Producers

This study has uncovered some interesting findings regarding who speciality regional food producers are and how they behave, but what implications are raised with respect to policy-making? To discuss these, the key initiatives of Food From Britain, the Countryside Agency and MAFF are returned to again. At a basic level, it may be seen from the objectives of these schemes that a common aim is to support the development and growth of regional speciality, or local product producers. All are based on the notion of invoking the power of the market - whether this be via the use of promotional brands, differentiating 'patents' and/or the provision of marketing assistance - to help eligible producers to become viable, successful businesses in their own right. Beyond this however, the vision of success which each of the initiatives has is somewhat different. In the case of the Food From Britain scheme, producers are encouraged to be commercially ambitious and growth oriented, to reach out to the most lucrative market opportunities on a national or global scale. In contrast, the Countryside Agency initiative has a vision of producers developing market opportunities on a more localised scale, embedding themselves in tighter networks and shorter supply chains within their local areas. The PDO/PGI scheme, meanwhile, appears to share Food From Britain's vision of speciality regional food producers reaching out to, and competing successfully in, geographically distant markets, in this case, on the basis of provisions of guarantees about products' essential territorial characteristics. Against this background, what lessons can be drawn for each of these initiatives and the visions they hold for the development of speciality food producers from the findings of the current study?

7.6.1 Practical Support Needs of Speciality Regional Food Producers

A first set of implications relates to the practical support needs of speciality regional food producers. Initiatives such as the Regional Speciality Food Groups and 'Eat the View' offer, as part of a package of support activities, technical advice and assistance related to marketing.

However, a key finding of the current study was that many speciality regional food producers possess considerable capabilities with respect to marketing and market-oriented behaviour (often in spite of their self-perceptions), with the key deficiencies being in the undertaking of activities such as research or communications, which are impeded through resource constraints. What this implies is that agency marketing advice and assistance needs to take account of and build upon the existing capabilities of producers rather than assuming a 'zero-knowledge' base, with the priority given to practical assistance in undertaking key activities rather than course provision in how to be 'market-oriented'. What is more, although speciality regional food producers did highlight marketing as a problematic area in the current study, it was difficulties in relation to other areas which seemed to take precedence, for example, dealing with increasing regulatory requirements (particularly health and hygiene), and engaging effectively in the supply chain in the face of increasing upstream and downstream concentration. Overall, the results of the current study suggest it is in these two key areas where policy initiatives need to concentrate effort to offer practical advice and assistance. One means by which individual agencies could realise this is by working harder to achieve more co-ordination and 'joined up thinking' between themselves and with other UK and EU authorities whose policies impact upon the operations of speciality food producers. For example, EU directives which have led to the closing down of local abattoirs, or decisions by MAFF (or latterly, the Food Standards Agency) to restrict the use of specialist ingredients such as unpasteurised milk, seem to militate against the development of local sourcing activities, not to mention the financial viability of many small-scale specialist food firms, which are the objectives of agencies such the Countryside Agency and Food From Britain. Thus, although development agencies do well to give assistance to producers 'on the ground' in the face of difficult circumstances in their business environments, such agencies should also wield their influence 'at the source' of the problem, working to create less hostile environmental circumstances for small speciality firms in the first place.

7.6.2 Market Mechanism Issues

The second policy implication of the findings of this study relates to the vision that policy initiatives have for the development and long-term success of speciality food producers. A key assumption made by initiatives is that the power of the market can be linked to small-scale and craft-based production activities to lever out desired, policy-relevant, socio-economic benefits (e.g. in the case of Food From Britain, the development of a vibrant small business sector in the food industry; in the case of the Countryside Agency, the development of self-sustaining local rural economies). Put another way, an harmonious interaction is presumed between the maintenance of socio-economically and/or ecologically significant production activities and the pursuit of commercially lucrative market opportunities. This presumption has validity in the sense that producers in the current study found the special characteristics of their products - often based on small-scale, or craft-like activities - *did* give them a marketing advantage. However, producers in the current study also conveyed a sense of being caught between the two. Thus sometimes, staying true to quirky ingredients, historic recipes, or old-fashioned production practices meant closing off potential market opportunities. In other circumstances, producers spoke of having to update products or premises in order to meet their commercial goals. Thus *tensions* were perceived to exist between the maintenance of specialist production activities (which make these producers targeted for policy support in the first place), and the maintenance of the enterprise as a commercially viable business (the mechanism through which these producers are intended to develop).

What implications does this observed tension have for policy initiatives? First, at a general level, policy-makers need to recognise that there *are* potential difficulties in using market mechanisms to achieve social or ecological objectives, and that the two are not always mutually self-reinforcing. In acknowledging this, scheme co-ordinators then need to be clear about the optimal balance they would like businesses within their schemes to strike between

engaging in desirable production activities and pursuing commercial objectives. In terms of the Food From Britain initiative, which prioritises the pursuit of market opportunities, care must surely be taken to ensure that supported firms do indeed undertake some form of small-scale, craft-based activity, otherwise the singling out of these firms for support would appear to be unsustainable, and would surely give rise to disputes in the sector. In terms of 'Eat the View', the Countryside Agency must consider the extent to which producers should be allowed to adapt processes, cut costs, or pursue geographically distant markets in order to be commercially viable. If it is too restrictive about such aspects, it risks not attracting any producers to its scheme, or simply adding to the business problems of those who do register. If it is too lax, then it risks including producers who do not contribute to its socio-cultural and ecological sustainability objectives. The PDO/PGI scheme co-ordinators, it seems, must strike a similar balance between restriction and leniency in its award of designations. Assuming, then, that scheme co-ordinators can determine the optimal balance they want producers to strike between the pursuit of commercial advantage and undertaking of socially/ecologically significant activities, support is then needed to help producers manage the balance themselves (which can be complicated, as this study as discovered), in such a way as to achieve complementarity between individual businesses' goals and those of the scheme itself.

7.7 Theoretical Conclusions

The policy relevant implications of the findings of this research having been discussed, it remains for this section to contemplate the theoretical insights which have been gleaned. Overall, it may be argued that there has been much in the findings of this study to support the notions in the sociological and geographical literatures that a blurring of boundaries between concepts such as craft, art and industry has occurred, such that simple, definitive characterisations of speciality regional food producer profiles and behaviour are unrealistic. Producer profiles are multiple, rather than singular in nature, and behaviours are the result of

an overlapping of contrasting tendencies rather than the dominance of one tendency to the exclusion of all others. It is equally problematic to try to define product-related concepts such as typicity or tradition. What the research has found is that protagonists in any field of study - in this case speciality regional food producers - construct meanings for these concepts and employ them proactively to support given beliefs or standpoints which they hold. As such, these concepts are subject to multiple, constantly changing meanings. Objective 'truths' and definitive definitions of phenomena such as speciality regional foods or craft production are simplistic delusions. However, in seeking to understand the different layers of meaning which do exist, and by relating these to the agendas of the various protagonists, a better understanding may be gained as to what these phenomena really mean and signify in society today. This has been the approach attempted by the current investigation.

7.8 Closing Statement: Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This thesis has comprised an investigation of the nature and meaning of speciality regional foods in the UK today, through examination of both the products themselves and the profile and behaviour of the producers who bring them to the marketplace. Taking a combined sociological and marketing perspective, it has been found that both products and producers have varied natures and profiles, and embody complex, multiple meanings. Overall, some intriguing and illuminating findings have been generated. Nevertheless, the investigation, and the findings arising from it, are subject to a number of limitations.

1. First, it is important to highlight that the empirical component of this investigation, on which a number of important conclusions are based, is drawn from data collected from a very small number of producers. As qualitative research approaches, by their very nature, tend to involve much smaller numbers of observations than more quantitative approaches, it cannot be considered therefore that the results of this research are 'representative' of all speciality regional food producers in the UK today. Although the tenets of grounded theory suggest

that it is possible to extend the explanatory propositions resulting from this type of analysis to a wider population, this has to be done tentatively. For example, the propositions resulting from the current study cannot be considered extendible to producers operating within very different socio-economic contexts or supply chain infrastructures to the participants in this study. Thus, the results of this empirical investigation, although possessing some generalisability, are nevertheless based on a small volume of empirical observations and are discrete therefore to the contexts and conditions identified in relation to these observations.

2. A further methodological limitation of the research is the choice of sampling frame, or basis on which the research participants were chosen from the wider community. Given that producers were chosen on the basis of evidence of territorial distinctiveness in their products, rather than on the basis of particular production methods, it is perhaps not surprising to find that there was a wide variation in the profiles of the producers, and also in their mentalities and behaviours. Quite different conclusions may have been drawn if, for example, only producers of PDO/PGI products had been selected, or only those belonging to a craft guild or association. Thus, the choice of sampling frame impacts on the conclusions of the research, requiring some caution in interpretation.

3. Aside from the methodological constraints, a third limitation of the research is the specificity of the conclusions to the UK context. The main body of literature drawn upon to inform the social historical perspective of the investigation, in terms of both foods and craft production, tended to be highly specific to western Europe and, in particular, the UK. It may be imagined that the impact of macro-environmental forces in other countries in the Europe and beyond would be quite different, leading to variations in the contemporary nature and status of regional foods and craft production. For example, in the UK the impact of the Industrial Revolution is widely noted as being extensive and severe, leading to quite specific impacts on craft activity and the process of food provisioning. By contrast, these activities

and processes might be expected to hold different status and meaning in countries where industrialisation had less far-reaching consequences. The status of small firms, and the values attached to their activities and behaviour, might also be expected to vary from country to country depending on the prevailing socio-economic climate and the profile of the economic production base. Therefore extrapolations from the conclusions of this research - with respect to the meaning of phenomena such as 'craft' or 'tradition', or 'market-oriented' or 'entrepreneurial' - also need to be made with caution.

Having outlined the key limitations of this investigation, it is appropriate to conclude with some pointers as to useful avenues for future research. These include suggestions for useful extensions of the current study, as well as proposals for further analysis of some of its key findings:

1. First, having identified some interesting findings from this study, notwithstanding the observed limitations, future research could involve conducting similar studies on a wider geographic basis in the UK. This could be useful as it might be found that producers in different regions of the UK - particularly those with distinct identities such as Scotland and Wales - perceive and experience their operating environments and purposes slightly differently to those producers participating in the current research. It would be interesting to discover, for example, whether the same perceptions regarding essential elements of typicity exist amongst producers whose regions have a more distinctive identity. Alternatively, sector-specific studies could also be useful, focusing, for example, on producer profile and behaviour in the cheese sector, or the processed meat sector. This could allow for more detailed analysis of the differences between production methods employed and behaviours displayed across a range of types and sizes of firms all producing broadly the same sorts of product. Contextualisation of producer perceptions and accounts could also be more

sensitive, linking observations of their mentalities and behaviours to more deeply described historic and contemporary environmental forces shaping the sector.

2. Future research might also usefully involve extension of the present study across national boundaries, replicating similar in-depth studies of speciality regional food producers in other countries. As the limitations of the current study have described above, it is likely that the historic and contemporary socio-economic contexts surrounding speciality regional food production will vary considerably from country to country, with consequent impacts on behaviour. Replication of the present study in other countries would allow for a cross-cultural comparison of products and producers, which would help to give a fuller understanding of the macro-environmental forces impacting on their nature and meaning. Such an approach has practical value in the light of EU Regulation 2081/92: given that this legislation is being applied Europe-wide, a better understanding is needed of how this legislation matches up with the realities of speciality regional food products and producers in different European countries.

3. A final avenue for future research may be to investigate in more detail the complexities of meaning involved in speciality regional food producer behaviour. On the one hand it seems that 'craft' mentality and commercial goals are in opposition, yet on the other hand there appears to be complementarity between some aspects of craft-based, market oriented and entrepreneurial behaviours. This complexity needs further scrutiny. Alternatively, future research could seek to investigate further, or test, the proposition made in this study that producer perceptions and behaviour are a function of market or competitive circumstances. Therefore, the accounts and behaviour of producers operating in different markets (on the basis of perceived growth rates, degrees of competitiveness, etc.) could be collected, and comparisons made between them. A quantitative approach may be useful for this type of

investigation, acting as a complement to the more in-depth, but situation specific findings of the qualitative approach followed in this investigation.

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Introductory Letter for Contact with Interviewees

[Date]

[Interviewee Name
Interviewee Address]

Dear [Interviewee Name]

I am a researcher at Newcastle University, currently involved in a project investigating the attitudes of managers of small to medium-sized food and drink businesses in the North of England. I am interested in finding out about the types of business and production they are involved with, their attitudes towards their products, and their impressions of their customers. To this end, I am undertaking interviews with a selection of owners and managers of food and drink businesses, particularly those producing what may be described as "regional" products. Having spoken to [name of co-ordinator] of [name of regional Speciality Food Group], I am writing to you to ask if I could come to speak to you within the next week or two as part of this research.

The interview will last approximately 30 minutes, arranged at a time that is most convenient for you, and covering issues relating to your experiences and perceptions of your business, products and customers. The discussion is completely confidential, and I am hoping that the study, which is being produced independently of any commercial interests by the University, will provide the small food and drink business community with useful information on current practices, motivations and aspirations amongst a selection of managers in the northern region.

I will contact you by phone within the next couple of days, with a view to arranging an appointment to visit you. I realise that you have a busy schedule, but even a short meeting would be very beneficial to my research. Any time that you can spare would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours sincerely

Angela Tregear

Interview Discussion Guide

1. Biographical Details

Business
- please describe the subject of your business
- how has the business developed?
- distribution - regional? national? export? type of outlet?
- advertising - where? content?
- pricing - how set?

Own Background
- how have you become involved in business?
- what is current role?
- what are you particularly proud of? like to change?

Competition
- are there similar businesses to yours in the area?
- who would you say you are in competition with?

2. Place/Location

Importance to Business
- obviously located in north - what role does that play (you and business)?
- what about being located in Yorkshire/Cumbria etc.?
- could this business exist in another location in England?
- would you describe your products as regional?
- are you a local/incomer?

3. Products

Product Type
- please give a summary of your product range
- if speaking to someone unfamiliar with products, how would describe them?
- your products are different from others in category, how?

Mechanistic/craft
- your product involves mechanisation?
- any part you couldn't mechanise?
- quality control procedures - what is your view? some producers variations...

Symbolism/imagery
- can you describe the packaging of your products - what trying to say?
- what is design based on? Whose decision?
- How do customers react to packaging?
- Why do customers choose your product?

4. Customers

Profile
- can you describe your customers?
- are they locals/tourists?
- has clientele changed over time?
- why do people buy your products?

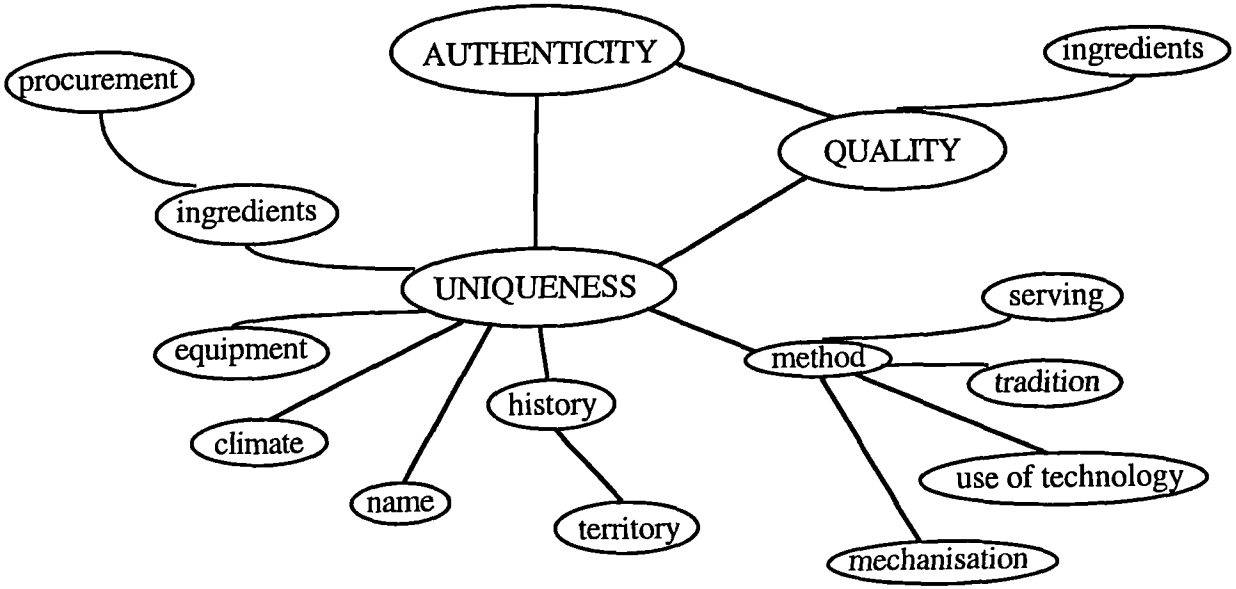
5. Marketing

- what is your approach to marketing?
- what is your interpretation of marketing?
- have you ever changed your product in response to customer feedback?

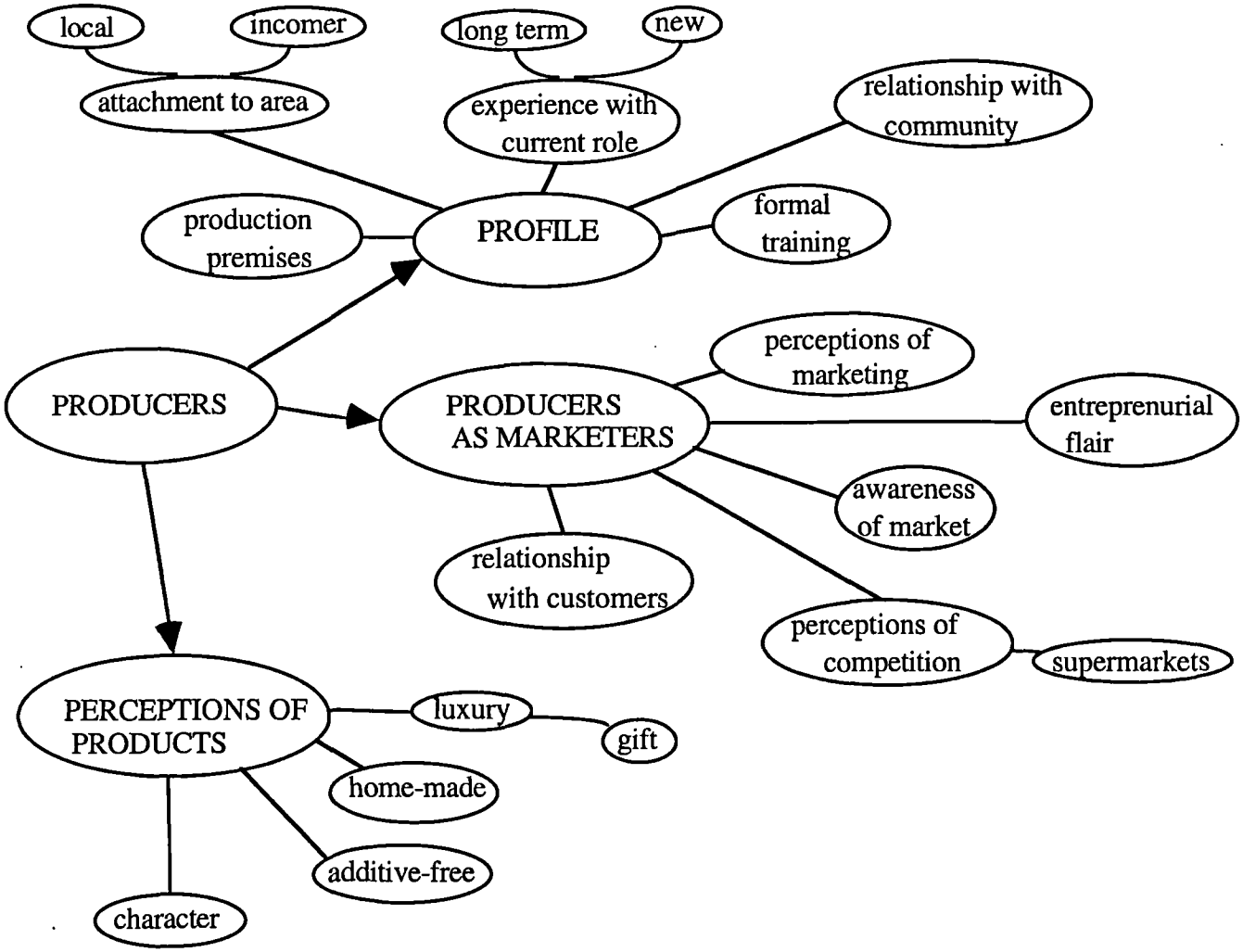
Marketing Orthodoxy
- hypothetical question relating to market orientation

Concept Labels Used for Initial Coding of Transcript Data

Concept Label	Description
Profile	Testimony relating to interviewee background and experience
Mentality	Expressions relating to interviewees' mentality and 'world view'; evidence of predispositions, beliefs and values
Business Manager	Expressions where interviewees speak as managers of a business
Socio-Economic Context	Perceptions and experiences of socio-economic context and environment relating to firm
Growth	Expressions of intentions and views on business growth
Production Process	Accounts and descriptions of production processes adopted within firm
Technology	Perceptions and expressions relating to the use of (new) technology in the firm
NPD	Testimony relating to the development of new products
Marketer	Expressions where interviewees speak as 'marketers', i.e. in textbook terms
Product Descriptor	Descriptions of production-related and physical attributes of products
Regionality	Testimony relating to the influence of place or territory on products, the firm, or self
Competition	Perceptions of competing firms and products
Supermarkets	Perceptions, attitudes and views relating to large food multiples, and the pros and cons of supplying such firms
Product Appeal	Descriptions of the intangible attributes of products: what interviewees feel their products offer the consumer
Customer Profile	Description, perceptions and revealed extent of knowledge of customers
Promotion	Accounts of promotional activities in the firm
Pricing	Accounts of pricing activities in the firm
Location	Reflections on the impact of physical location on logistical/marketing aspects of the business
Customer Relations	Testimony relating to the relationship interviewees have with their customers
Quality	Interviewee perceptions and descriptions of 'quality' in relation to their products and sectors
Industrial Production	Perceptions of large-scale or industrial manufacturers, including perceptions of opposition from such firms
Procurement	Accounts of procurement activities within the firm
Distribution	Accounts of distribution activities within the firm
Orientation	Evidence relating to the orientation of the interviewee with respect to the market or production
PDO	Testimony relating to the European Union 'designation of origin' legislation



An example of a conceptual map developed during grounded theory analysis of interviewees' testimonies relating to their products and production processes. Main nodes (in capitals) indicate key categories of importance to the research. The remaining nodes indicate related dimensions for which data emerged during the analytical process. Lines on the map indicate tentative relationships between categories and dimensions. Most commonly, dimensions are proposed to be constituent properties of categories.



An example of a conceptual map developed during grounded theory analysis of interviewees' testimonies relating to themselves. Main nodes (in capitals) indicate key categories of importance to the research. The remaining nodes indicate related dimensions for which data emerged during the analytical process. Lines on the map indicate tentative relationships between categories and dimensions. Dimensions may be alternative aspects or constituent properties of categories.