CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Exploring place and identity through food and tourism

Turn on the television or enter any bookshop and it will become immediately obvious that food and travel are two of contemporary society's biggest obsessions. Although previous decades have produced their own iconic food and drink writers, such as Elizabeth David and Mrs Beeton, the first years of the 21st century have seen a particularly high level of interest in the culinary sphere. From cookbooks by household names such as Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson that have come to dominate the non-fiction bestseller lists, to popular programmes such as 'Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares' or BBC Two's 'Great British Menu', it is hard to escape the appeal of the celebrity chef. Food, it seems, has become fashionable again and there is no limit to the choice available. Take a trip to your local supermarket and you will find everything from gourmet Thai-style takeaways for the single person and special, locally-sourced clotted cream, right the way through to basic commodities such as carrots, potatoes and Heinz baked beans. However, you do not even have to go to the supermarket to buy your food. In today's globalised world, the discerning consumer could just as easily shop for groceries online, receive delivery of an organic vegetable box, or visit the local farmer's market – the possibilities are endless.

Similar developments are taking place in the travel sector. The introduction of economy fares on airlines and flexible booking systems that allow travellers to

purchase tickets online in their lunch hour has meant that more people can now go to more places than ever before and, although the traditional package holiday remains popular, many consumers are choosing to tailor their own holiday experience. From canoeing down the Amazon to trekking in the Himalayas or tackling the gaming tables in Las Vegas – there is a company that will organise it for you, or you can book it yourself on the Internet. Alternatively, programmes like the BBC Series 'Coast', David Attenborough's celebrated 'Planet Earth', or Sky's 'Globe Trekker' mean that armchair travellers can experience the world from the comfort of their living rooms. There is also a long history of travel writers from Mark Twain and the explorer, Wilfred Thesiger, to more contemporary figures such as Michael Palin and Bill Bryson.

The desire to see other places and sample different foods is not an exclusively modern phenomenon as Lucy Long, one of the few academics to have tackled the subject of culinary tourism, explains: *"the phenomenon of individuals exploring other cultures out of curiosity is neither postmodern nor peculiarly Western. I see tourism as a universal human impulse – curiosity and an adventurous spirit are facets of personality that are shaped in their expression by the ethos and institutions of specific cultures, but the impulse itself is not dependent on particular historical circumstances"* (Long, 2004a p.35).

The fact that this process of cultural exploration has been going on for centuries is, in itself, another justification for a closer investigation of food and travel practices. If food and tourism are such popular subjects in their own

right, how much more powerful could they be in combination? Some broadcasters have already attempted to exploit the synergy between the two, through programmes such as 'Floyd on Italy' or 'Rick Stein's Food Heroes'. Despite this, few academics have investigated the nature of the connections between food and tourism, with most existing studies choosing to focus purely on economic factors, such as whether increased tourist consumption of local foods can result in a multiplier effect to benefit the host community (Torres, 2002).

In recent years, however, a small but growing body of academics has argued that food and tourism can influence the ways in which we make sense of people and places – including ourselves (Germann Molz, 2004, Long, 2004a, Bell and Valentine, 1997). A review of the key food and tourism literatures also reveals strong similarities between the two subjects, as Chapter 2 demonstrates. This thesis is therefore an attempt to contribute to this emerging line of enquiry by investigating how food and tourism relate, firstly to each other and, secondly, to the important and related concepts of place and identity.

Before I outline the specific aims of this study, I believe it is important to explain something about my own background because the positionality of the researcher will inevitably have an impact upon how he or she chooses to engage with the study in question (Mason, 2002). I had always loved travelling so, after spending three years in the workplace, I left my job in order to fulfil a long-held ambition of going to New Zealand. During my six-month trip, I

encountered many different people and places and became acutely aware of the fact that travel can make you see yourself and the world around you in a different light. Although I had never been particularly interested in food, my travel experiences also alerted me to how even small changes in diet could add something to the sensation of being in a certain place as my memories of food and place became linked. When I think of Wellington, for example, I think not only of its vibrant shopping streets and attractive waterfront district, but also of my favourite café, where I would enjoy fresh coffee and a caramel slice while watching the world go by. Such experiences raised a number of questions. Why was it that foods could become linked to places in this way? And if I – a tourist with no more than a passing interest in food – could have such experiences, then surely others would have similar stories to tell?

This sense of food as connected to place was strengthened on my return to England, where I discovered that 'local food' and farmers' markets were becoming increasingly popular. Having been brought up in the countryside, I had always been interested in environmental issues and the survival of the rural community. I was also concerned that modern intensive farming methods might be proving harmful to the planet and the consumer. The idea of developing local food economies was therefore an interesting proposition as it is claimed that alternative food networks (AFNs) can help address some of the social, economic and environmental dilemmas facing modern agriculture (Marsden, 2004, Boniface, 2003). However, despite market research suggesting that local foods could prove attractive to tourists looking for distinctive local products (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001), it soon

became apparent that the connections between local food and tourism had been largely ignored in academic circles. In particular, I discovered that most existing studies of local food consumption had chosen to focus exclusively on consumers, or exclusively on food producers. As a result, there was a dearth of studies analysing the full extent of the food chain and the connections within it, from those producing and marketing food products, at one end, to those consuming it, at the other. I felt that this was an important gap in the literature because, by failing to address the processes of interaction occurring between producers and consumers throughout the food chain, food theorists were missing some of the key motivations and barriers which appeared to play a role in shaping the development of the local food sector (see Chapter 7).

With these issues in mind, I chose to address these overlooked areas by investigating the links between food, place and identity, with a particular focus on local food and the relationships between producers and consumers throughout the food chain. The aim of this thesis was to develop concepts that will help us better understand people's holiday food and drink choices. This aim had two components:

A) To investigate how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of place.

B) To investigate how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of ourselves and others.

I then developed four detailed research questions to enable me to achieve this aim.

1) What role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?

2) How do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home?

3) What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?

4) What impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food sector?

Answering these questions involved a number of intellectual, methodological and analytical challenges. The following section provides a chapter outline to illustrate how I dealt with such issues.

1.2 Overview of the thesis

As discussed in the preceding section, there have been few academic studies of the links between food and tourism, despite the fact that there is an extensive literature on tourism and an equally extensive, yet separate, literature on food. In Chapter 2, I review these bodies of literature by arguing that many parallels can be drawn between them, especially where questions of place, identity and distinctiveness (Bourdieu, 1984) are concerned. Throughout the chapter, I use examples from both literatures to illustrate how our food and tourism choices are central to our understandings the world, the 'Self' and the 'Other'. I also highlight more recent debates concerning the role of alternative food networks (AFNs) and demonstrate how these can be linked to arguments about the role of authenticity within tourism. Chapter 2 therefore establishes the key theoretical debates influencing the thesis.

Chapter 3 then outlines my choice of a qualitative methodology based upon semi-structured interviews throughout the food chain, from the tourists consuming the products, at one end, to the local food producers, café and restaurant owners and food and tourism experts involved, at the other. I also explain why I chose to base my investigations upon two case-study areas of the Lake District and Exmoor. In addition to discussing the intellectual and practical challenges involved in the course of the fieldwork, I also draw upon the concepts developed in Chapter 2 to explain how the data were analysed.

Chapters 4 to 7 contain an analysis and discussion of my findings. In order to maintain structure and focus within the study, each chapter deals with one of the four separate research questions, as outlined in Section 1.1 (p.5). I begin the discussion in Chapter 4 which provides a general introduction to some of the key issues covered in the thesis by exploring the roles that food and drink play in the tourist experience. This chapter explores how anticipation and expectation are a vital part of the ways in which tourists engage with holiday foods and drinks. By exploring what factors contribute to people's most memorable holiday food experiences and the reverse scenario of holiday food disasters, I argue that food is a multi-dimensional experience linked to place, culture and identity. I also present a picture of the tourist as a dynamic and adaptable individual and emphasise that, when attempting to interpret any holiday food experience, an understanding of context is key.

I follow these arguments in Chapter 5 by analysing how people's holiday food and drink choices compare with the foods and drinks that they select at home.

The findings presented in this chapter critically assess the conventional ideas discussed in Chapter 2 which indicate that holidays should be understood as the binary opposite of life at home, so that 'home' foods and activities are safe and familiar, while 'away' foods and activities are adventurous and different (Plog, 1974, Fischler, 1988). However, contrary to these ideas found in the literature, Chapter 5 argues that both familiarity <u>and</u> difference are important components of the holiday food experience for tourists and food providers alike. In making this argument, I show that tourists are resourceful individuals who are capable of combining aspects of familiarity and difference in their vacations in a variety of ways. I then look at successful marketing initiatives adopted by café and restaurant owners to show how this group also balances the familiar and the different in order to segment consumer markets on the basis of taste (Bourdieu, 1984). As a result of this analysis, I argue that researchers must move away from understanding difference and familiarity as two opposing categories and propose a move towards a more hybridised viewpoint where the different and the familiar are understood as dynamic concepts that form part of a continuous spectrum on which tourists can locate themselves. Throughout the chapter, I also introduce some of the themes discussed more fully in Chapter 7 by highlighting the ways in which structural factors – such as age, family status and a person's financial and cultural resources – have the potential to impact on the degree of familiarity or difference that tourists are able and willing to accept.

Chapter 6 builds on this discussion by investigating the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks. It argues that food can

have powerful connections with place and that, by choosing to sample local foods and drinks that might be considered 'typical' of the area being visited, tourists can introduce an element of difference into the holiday, as discussed in Chapter 5. I begin by analysing tourist and producer understandings in order to show that 'local food' is a highly contested concept that is constructed differently by various actors according to a range of purposes, before going on to consider why foods and drinks are popular as souvenirs of place. I then extend the analysis by arguing that tourists often try to engage with local foods on holiday in order to help them gain a better understanding of the place and culture of a destination. Such arguments result in an evaluation of the role that authenticity can play in relation to holiday foods and drinks. Like local food, authenticity is shown to be a contested concept that is used in different ways by tourists and food providers alike. A vital component of this chapter is therefore an analysis of menus from a range of eating establishments in the Lake District and Exmoor, which provides an insight into how authenticity is actively constructed by café and restaurant owners. The findings presented here lead me to argue that, in addition to the spectrum of familiarity and difference discussed in Chapter 5, there is also a spectrum of authenticity that ranges from 'objective' understandings based upon the perceived qualities of the foods and drinks consumed, to 'existential' kinds of authenticity based upon the quality of the eating experience itself (Wang, 1999, Cohen, 2002). Local food is shown to be important throughout this spectrum because the imagery surrounding it makes explicit the story of its origins and helps us feel we are connecting more strongly with the people and places that produced it. However, although this chapter explores the ways in which locality and

authenticity can be socially constructed by food providers and tourists alike, I argue that the local food sector cannot, in itself, be viewed as entirely socially constructed because it is based upon particular realities of production and processing that are, in many ways, different from those employed by the 'conventional' agricultural sector.

The final stage of the analysis takes place in Chapter 7, which explores the impact of structural constraints on the holiday food sector. Whereas previous analysis chapters have focussed largely upon agency and the enabling role of structure, Chapter 7 seeks to redress the balance away from the voluntarism of choice-based approaches by examining some of the ways in which tourists and food providers are constrained by structural factors that are largely beyond their control. In doing so, this chapter addresses a gap in the literature as few authors have chosen to explore the constraining role that structures can play. Throughout the chapter, I consider the impact of macro-scale structures relating to political and economic factors as well as issues of access and availability in relation to particular food products. However, I also illustrate how smaller-scale processes such as family status, tastes and cognitive structures (Bourdieu, 1984) have the potential to influence the holiday food choices that people make. In discussing these issues, I argue that it is crucial to understand the importance of constraints, because only then can we understand that tourists and providers may sometimes be acting out of necessity rather than choice. However, the examples presented in the chapter also show that constraints are not straightforward, but overlapping and complex in nature. As a result, I argue that researchers should adopt a

holistic, context-sensitive approach that is capable of accounting for all the factors involved. Doing so also involves acknowledging that the relationship between tourists and providers is an interdependent one – just as decisions made by providers can enable or constrain the tourists, the same also applies *vice versa*.

Finally, Chapter 8 brings together the findings from the four analysis chapters in order to relate them back to the literature and the research aim of the thesis. In doing so, I propose four key themes that could help us develop an enhanced understanding of people's holiday food and drink choices:

- Difference and familiarity

- Identity

- Place

- Authenticity

In addition to these themes, I argue that researchers should pay attention to two overarching concepts – hybridity and context. These concepts are particularly important if we are to gain the maximum benefits from the four themes identified above because they encourage researchers to move beyond dichotomous thinking so that, for example, we stop thinking of people's holiday behaviour as being about the entirely different and the entirely adventurous, or the entirely familiar and the entirely safe. Instead, we should develop a more sophisticated analysis that enables us to see how and why both elements are successfully combined and recombined within the holiday. Context is also vital because this thesis shows that, if we want to understand why a certain food or a certain holiday experience is significant to

someone, we must understand the circumstances in which that experience took place. This necessitates an analysis of aspects unique to the individual concerned, as well as a consideration of the economic, social and political structures at work in that particular situation.

In making these arguments, Chapter 8 shows that eating is not just a matter of biological necessity but a multi-sensory experience that is used by tourists to develop a better understanding of the place they are visiting. Issues of identity are also involved because, through exploring foods in this way, tourists can gain a stronger sense of themselves and those around them.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Until recently, food and tourism studies have had a low profile within academia. Despite the fact that everybody eats and the majority of people – in the developed world at least – enjoy one or more holidays per year, convincing the world that both are deserving of intellectual enquiry has been a difficult task (Curtin, 1992). Thankfully, times are changing and it is now realised that, not only are both subjects worthy of study in their own right, they are also natural bedfellows which, studied together, can provide vital insights into our culture and environment (Morgan *et al.*, 2006, Marsden, 2004). As Massey *et al.* (1999) have argued: *"we make spaces and places, from the geopolitical to the intimate, in the living of our lives"* (p.246), and it is through such embodied, practical activities as eating and travelling that we make sense of our own identities and those of the people and places that surround us.

The key literatures on tourism and food have dealt extensively with place and identity – often with remarkably similar findings – and the first sections of this chapter (2.1-2.6) synthesize these separate bodies of literature by highlighting the ways in which their understandings of place and identity are linked. I begin by discussing how both literatures relate to geographical debates about postmodernism and globalisation, before going on to discuss how eating/drinking and travel are highly contextual activities that can hold different

meanings for us at different times. I then move on to consider the ways in which both practices are innately social in nature and, consequently, how they provide examples of our attempts to distinguish ourselves from others. This discussion leads to a consideration of how many of the concepts employed within the food and tourism literatures are binary in nature – such as the distinction between the 'Self' and the 'Other', the 'safe' and the 'adventurous', and the 'familiar' and the 'different'.

The second section of the chapter then turns to consider four additional, yet related, branches of the literature – those concerned, firstly, with an understanding of wine tourism, secondly, with the sociology of food consumption, thirdly, with the growth of the local food sector, and, finally, with the quest for the 'authentic' within tourism. These sections raise questions about the criteria on which our food and tourism decisions are based and place the study in context by outlining some of the key academic debates to affect the two sectors. Finally, I conclude by identifying the main themes from the chapter before explaining how these relate to the analytic structure outlined in Chapter 3.11.

2.2 A changing world? Postmodernism and globalisation in relation to food and tourism

The first point to note is that developments in food and tourism are not taking place in a conceptual vacuum. Instead, analysts such as Harvey (1990), Giddens (1993) and Massey, Allen and Sarre (1999) have focused upon the ways in which our world, and the way we experience it, is undergoing

significant changes – namely the phenomena of postmodernism and globalisation. Both terms have been the subject of controversy within academia. However, if used carefully, they have much to offer food and tourism studies, and I shall therefore discuss their implications for this research, beginning with postmodernism.

2.2.1 Postmodernism

One approach to postmodernism is that developed by Harvey (1990). He investigates the claim that, around the early 1970s, we witnessed a transition from modernism to postmodernism, which can best be described as *"a new structure of feeling"* (p.42). Whereas modernism was characterised by a quest to discover 'universal truths' about the world through the extension of rationality and science, postmodernism, as understood by Harvey, is said to signal the end of this project. Instead of universal truths, it is concerned with difference and the acknowledgement of a plurality of perspectives. This has been associated with what Harvey describes as the 'depthlessness' of contemporary culture, where there is an obsession with appearances, and where images and symbols can be appropriated from any culture or historical period to be combined in new ways for the present.

In relation to food, one example of this is what Scarpato and Daniele (2003) have termed 'New Global Cuisine', in which inspiration, ingredients and culinary techniques are gathered from all over the world and blended together to create novel and unexpected delights such as *"lobster nachos with Boursin cheese, Asian tomato relish and guacamole"* or *"chicken ravioli with wild*

mushrooms and Australian macadamia nuts pesto" (Scarpato and Daniele, 2003 p.304). Such dishes contrast with previous culinary wisdom where chefs would adhere to one national or regional style of cuisine to create the familiar flavours associated with, for example, Provençal or Tuscan cookery.

Tourism is also argued to provide evidence of the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Urry's concept of the 'post-tourist' (1995) refers to a new type of contemporary tourist who is no longer concerned with seeking knowledge or authentic cultures *per se,* but who understands that tourism is a game and who is quite happy to move from appreciating high culture to indulging in simple, manufactured pleasures and experiences. An example could be the decision to buy 'tacky-looking' souvenirs as pieces of kitsch.

Associated with the rise of postmodernism is the equally important transition from a Fordist mode of production, which was associated with the mass production of standardised products, to a Post-Fordist regime, which is about the flexibility of capital and labour. According to Harvey (1990), this increased flexibility has enabled the rapid production of small batches of customised goods that maximise consumer choice. It can be argued that such changes are evident in tourism, where large-scale packaged holidays to major resorts are rejected by experienced 'post-tourists' in favour of flexible, independent travel or tailor-made, small-group walking tours and expeditions to places far removed from the main tourist destinations (Urry, 1995). In relation to food, consumer choice has also been widened so that diners are offered fair-trade or gluten-free products in cafés and restaurants, for example, while a

proliferation of different ranges within supermarkets also allows customers to choose from 'value', 'organic' or 'premium' versions of the same product.

2.2.2 Globalisation

Discussions of postmodernism cannot, however, be easily separated from discussions of globalisation. Globalisation, as understood by authors such as Amin and Thrift (2004) and Giddens (1993), refers to the ways in which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected on a global scale. As Bell and Valentine (1997) and Shaw and Williams (2004) have noted, changes in styles of food consumption and travel both provide examples of how globalisation enters our daily lives. Today, for example, cheap airline flights make it possible for millions of tourists to visit far-flung destinations every year, while television images from the world's most remote locations can bring exotic places to our living rooms. In relation to food, a trip to the local supermarket, a tour of London's restaurants, or a visit to the cookery section of a bookshop reveals an astonishing array of cuisines waiting to tempt us.

Urry (2007) also argues for a post-disciplinary 'mobilities turn' within the social sciences which *"enables the 'social world' to be theorized as a wide array of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures and ideologies that all involve, entail or curtail various kinds of movement of people, or ideas, or information or objects"* (Urry, 2007 p.18) . He shows that transport and communication are integral to our understanding of social life and distinguishes between five types of travel: the *physical movement of objects*, *virtual travel* through the internet, *imaginative travel* through the telephone,

radio and television, *communicative travel* through person-to-person messages, and *corporeal travel*, which is bodily travel through the various forms of transport physically available to us (Urry, 2006). Urry argues that, while all five have increased in recent years, there is still no replacement for corporeal travel thanks to a tourism culture where *"places need to be seen 'for oneself' and experienced directly"* (Urry, 1990 p.4). Indeed, the urge to travel physically to distant places may be intensified by the increase in virtual travel as *"increased visual and VR information about different places and their unique characteristics will probably heighten the desire to be corporeally present at the place in question and hence to travel there"* (Urry, 2002 p.269).

Such developments can be related to wider debate within geography about the extent to which globalisation may be changing our experience of space and time. For Harvey (1990), the use of new communications technologies has made geographical distance almost irrelevant.

> *"The annihilation of space through time has radically changed the commodity mix that enters into daily reproduction… The whole world's cuisine is now assembled in one place in almost exactly the same way that the world's geographical complexity is nightly reduced to a series of images on a static television screen"* (Harvey, 1990 p.299).

Our understandings of space and time are central to the ways in which we make sense of our everyday lives and it is for this reason that globalising processes are also capable of transforming our understandings of the identity

of people and places. The rapid movement of tourists, migrants, ingredients and culinary styles across the world creates an environment in which what we regard as local may not be the things that are available on our doorsteps, as Thomas Keller, chef and owner of The French Laundry (a renowned restaurant in the Napa Valley, California) has described: *"Local to me is anything I can get here by jet…We get lobsters from Maine every day…they are local to me because they're coming in my back door every day, fresh, live, vibrant…"* (Bryant, 2001, cited in Scarpato and Daniele, 2003 p.304).

A simple extension of this is to argue that the barriers between home and away and between work and leisure have also been broken down by the proliferation of exotic travel and cookery programmes, exciting new restaurants and, of course, the Internet and satellite television. It could be argued that, instead of thinking of tourism practices in terms of either/or distinctions – for example, the idea that one is either 'at home' or 'away' – we should recognise that, for many tourists, an element of hybridity is involved. Today, therefore, many holidaymakers enjoy making repeat visits to destinations such as the Lake District because they involve an element of similarity while also allowing the visitor to try out slightly new activities during their stay. In this sense, the Lake District is acting as both 'familiar' and 'new'. Equally it could be argued that the increased availability of novel and sophisticated ready meals in supermarkets also involves an element of hybridity because they allow the consumer to enjoy the appeal of trying different foods – a practice often associated with eating out – while also having the convenience of eating at home.

However, as will be discussed more extensively in Section 2.9, globalisation has also been paralleled by a seemingly contrary process whereby the small-scale and the local are seen to be increasingly important. Examples of this include a resurgence of interest in 'local', 'traditional' food products, as well as a renewed concern for local distinctiveness of culture and craft items within tourism. Today, theorists argue that globalisation and localisation should not be viewed as opposing trends because of the ways in which both processes are intimately related to each other. Thus Urry (2000) talks of 'glocalization' where *"there is a parallel irreversible process of globalization-deepening-localization-deepening globalisation and so on. Both are bound together through a dynamic relationship, as huge flows of resources move backwards and forwards between the global and the local. Neither the global nor the local can exist without the other"* (Urry, 2000 p.199).

In this way, changes relating to postmodernism and globalisation can be linked to the kinds of food and tourism practices that are seen to be practical and desirable. However, because travel and eating form such a major part of our existence, we encounter some difficult problems for research. Firstly, how should we define tourism? Is the marketing professional on a business trip to Rome a tourist? Or the student visiting relatives in Sydney? It would be foolish to suggest that all our journeys have equal relevance to our understanding of place and identity. Equally, it is obvious that not every drink or meal holds the same significance for us. A Valentine's dinner with a partner may be a highly important occasion on which we evaluate our relationship and think about our

future together, while a sandwich grabbed on the run from the local garage might be forgotten as soon as it has been eaten. The following section reviews what the literature has to say about the varying extent to which we become involved with our eating and travel practices and highlights the role that context plays in this.

2.3 Involvement and context in the holiday experience

Long (2004a) identifies the issue of involvement as a key consideration for food and tourism research: *"Because food is a physiological necessity as well as a social and cultural construct and expressive medium, it highlights the complexity of touristic involvement in eating. An individual may be a tourist in an objective sense, but at a particular time and place may eat out of hunger rather than curiosity"* (Long, 2004a p.5).

She is supported by Boniface (2003) who argues that, unless visitors are self-catering, they will have to eat out every day. It would therefore be misleading to assume that every holiday meal is going be a special or significant experience. Warde and Martens (2000) also investigated the practice of eating out in British cities which, although focused on residents rather than tourists, had some interesting implications for this study. During their research, they asked interviewees to explain what they understood by 'eating out', on the grounds that a meal eaten at lunchtime in the workplace canteen, a takeaway sandwich purchased and consumed during a shopping trip, or a slice of coffee and cake in a café with friends could all technically be considered to be 'eating out' because all involve foods being consumed outside the home. However,

interviewees were doubtful as to whether such events counted because, for them, 'eating out' had particular expectations attached to it. For example, it was generally considered to involve doing something different on a special occasion. Eating out was also associated with social interaction with others and what many respondents referred to as the consumption of a 'proper meal', rather than just a snack.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is the concept of involvement (Mitchell and Hall, 2003) or intentionality (Long, 2004b), which can help explain why we engage more fully with food and travel practices on some occasions than others. Therefore a person could be said to become a culinary tourist when he or she makes a deliberate decision to explore a particular dish or style of cuisine while at home or on holiday. Long defines culinary tourism as:

> *"The intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an other – participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own"* (Long, 2004b p.21).

The concept of involvement could also be applied to the tourist experience, as the travel writer and philosopher, De Botton (2002), makes a similar claim: *"The pleasure we derive from journeys is perhaps dependent more on the mindset with which we travel than on the destination we travel to"* (De Botton, 2002 p.246). He proves this point by going on a tour of his local

neighbourhood and trying to see it through fresh eyes, whereupon he notices

many things that he had previously missed, despite encountering those

streets everyday.

By focusing on the concept of involvement, the above examples show that the

meaning inherent in food and travel experiences cannot be separated from the

context in which those experiences take place, because context has an

influence over the extent to which we become 'involved' in particular

situations. Therefore context refers, not only to the physical setting of the

experience – a fashionable restaurant as opposed to a workplace canteen, for

example – but also to a person's mindset on a given occasion. The key

question for this project is, of course, why – and in what context – do we

become involved in food while on holiday? However, in order to answer this

question, it is also necessary to understand reverse instances where we may

not consider holiday food and drink to be interesting and special. This need to

investigate both types of behaviour was a major factor behind my decision to

interview visitors who were not interested in food, as well as those who were

(Chapter 3.5).

Discussions of involvement and context also highlight the way in which food

and travel can be strongly linked to emotion and memory. Recent

developments in Geography have argued that our feelings and emotions have

always played a central role in our responses to people and place, and that

researchers should take account of this in their work (Bondi *et al.*, 2005), and

similar arguments can also be applied to food. For example, Bell and

Valentine (1997) describe how memories of unappetising semolina pudding served during school dinners can put you off that food for life, while Hage (1997) explains that home-made foods can have the opposite effect and describes how Lebanese migrants used recipes from home to help them feel more comfortable in their new community in Sydney, Australia. Equally, places encountered on holiday can have a special significance for the individual. You might have fond memories of Tenerife if the weather was good and you made some new friends, while you might hate Prague because it was the place where you got a stomach bug and had your wallet stolen.

Closely linked to memory is the idea of expectation and anticipation, and Warde and Martens (2000) discovered that consumers often enjoyed the preparations involved in eating out – such as dressing up and driving somewhere different – because these appeared to heighten expectations. Many of the promotional strategies employed by the food and tourism industries seem specifically geared to heightening this sense of anticipation among consumers in the hope that they will be enticed into visiting a particular holiday destination or dining venue.

Urry (1995) argues that expectations are a vital component of tourism because *"there is an anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered"* (Urry, 1995 p.132). This process of anticipation is heightened by media representations of places which, Urry argues, help construct the tourist gaze. However, these expectations also play

a role in how the tourist responds to his or her holiday because *"such practices provide the signs in terms of which the holiday experiences are understood, so that what is then seen is interpreted in terms of these pre-given categories"* (Urry, 1995 p.132). In short, how we respond to the foods and drinks encountered on holiday will depend – in part, at least – upon what we expected our dining experiences to be like in that place. This response is also an emotional one – we anticipate having pleasurable consumption experiences at our destination and, if these expectations are not met, the result is disappointment and frustration (Urry, 2005).

However, food and travel practices are not just concerned with the thoughts and perceptions of the individual. Although activities such as eating out and holidaying can be undertaken alone, the food and tourism literature has tended to concentrate on the ways in which both practices often involve social groupings. As a result, it has been suggested that people can make sense of their holidays and eating experiences through interacting with others around them. The following section considers the ways in which both are inherently sociable activities where our interactions with others can form an important part of the occasion.

2.4. Social aspects of food and tourism

In relation to tourism, Urry (1995) argues that *"it is crucial to recognise how the consumption of tourist services is social. It normally involves a particular social grouping, a 'family' household, a 'couple', or a 'group'"* (Urry, 1995 p.131). In this way, part of the enjoyment of holidays results from the fact that

we are 'consuming' tourist goods and services alongside others – hence the importance that visitors may attach to the 'ambience' of a restaurant or hotel.

In relation to food, Warde and Martens (2000) also found that it was not so much 'eating out', but the concept of eating out *with others*, that was important to people. They discovered that people enjoyed eating out precisely because they saw it as a social activity and, when dining out as part of a group, there was an unspoken rule that each person had a responsibility to help create and maintain a convivial atmosphere so that everyone would enjoy the occasion. This need to keep things enjoyable for others meant that many interviewees would avoid making a complaint about substandard food or service on such occasions for fear that it would spoil things for the other members of the party.

Social relations are also involved when the family eats at home. Bell and Valentine (1997), for example, have commented on the social discourse which says that *"a 'proper meal' is a meal which is eaten together as a family and that part of the intention behind producing such a meal is to produce 'home' and 'family'"* (Bell and Valentine, 1997 p.59). Warde and Martens found further evidence of this in their study where they compared meals eaten at home with those eaten out. Through in-depth interviews they discovered that eating out and the family meal at home were based on shared understandings that were intimately related to each other. For example, although meals out were seen as a chance to enjoy socialising with friends and family members, there was a general consensus among participants that eating out should be an infrequent activity that was reserved for special occasions, such as weekends or

holidays, in contrast to the meal at home, which should usually be a daily activity. Although nearly all those interviewed said that they enjoyed eating out, very few of them expressed a desire to eat out more often because they felt that the resulting experience would not be as special if it was repeated too regularly. Therefore: *"shared understandings of meals are internalised discourses of appropriate conduct, and they operate as a force that makes individuals limit their use of eating out services"* (Warde and Martens, 2000 p.105).

Of particular relevance to culinary tourism is the concept of foodways, which Long (2004a) takes from the anthropologist Yoder (1972, cited in Long, 2004a). Foodways illustrate the ways in which food gains its meaning through the social context surrounding it – including the place where it is bought, the way it is prepared and with whom it is shared. In this way, thanks to a different social and environmental context, some cider or sausages bought from the local farmers' market while on holiday with friends can have a very different meaning from those purchased from the local supermarket in the course of a routine working week. The same principle also applies to tourism. De Botton (2002) describes how falling out with your travelling companions can mean that you have a horrible time, even if the destination itself is idyllic. Conversely, it is also possible to have a wonderful time in a less than perfect destination thanks to the company of your friends or family.

Because, in summary, both food/drink and tourism involve social relations, it is also important to consider the role played by factors such as income, social

status, and cultural and educational resources. Bourdieu's (1984) writings on distinction and taste examine how these factors relate to the ways in which we understand ourselves and our place in the world. They can therefore be applied to studies of food and tourism, as the following section describes.

2.5 Distinction and the importance of 'good taste'

Bourdieu (1984) argues that everything, from the way we speak to the clothes we wear, is an attempt to distinguish ourselves from others. A key component of his analysis is the emergence of a new class of *petite bourgeoisie* who lack the high levels of economic capital characteristically associated with the dominant classes, but who are well-endowed with educational, cultural and social capital that they use to elevate themselves in the social hierarchy and challenge the status of the dominant class.

In relation to this thesis, what we eat or drink, and where we go on holiday, both provide examples of such distinctions at work. A safari in South Africa, for example, carries a much higher social status than a weekend in Blackpool, while Boniface (2003) argues that certain styles of eating-out also come to be associated with particular social groups and their values. For example, she sees the tearoom as a feminine, gentile environment that is linked to nostalgia, while the fish-and-chip shop is associated with proletarianism and the designer restaurant with trendiness. Therefore, it could be argued that, by dining at McDonalds or taking tea at the Ritz, we are making a statement about our position in society or perhaps even experimenting with being part of a different social group to which we aspire. Sharples (2003) also writes about

the stylisation of leisure time, through which food and tourism practices become vital markers of status. She provides an example of this in her study of the growth in cookery school holidays, such as that provided by the Padstow Seafood School in Cornwall, which is owned by renowned chef, Rick Stein. Sharples concludes that:

"The reasons behind this predicted growth [in cookery school holidays] *are complex but increased leisure time, more disposable income among some consumer groups and a desire in some markets to have good food and wine, and its associated culture, as an indicator of status, identity and health are possible factors"* (Sharples, 2003 p.111).

According to Bourdieu (1984), at the root of all such practices of distinction is the concept of taste. *"It distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others"* (Bourdieu, 1984 p.56). A common example of this type of distinction is the claim that a particular destination or kind of cuisine is "not for us".

Implicit in these social judgements is the question of whether a person is considered to have 'good' or 'bad' taste. However, such distinctions do not account for the ways in which people may 'playfully' assume different identities for a short period of time. For example, we might enjoy staying in a stately home and experimenting with being a country squire for a week while

on holiday. On another occasion, we might visit a fish-and-chip shop in Morecambe for a contrasting experience.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that we assume tastes are 'natural' when, in fact, cultural capital is acquired through our social upbringing and the education system. He gives the example of art appreciation, where a person is excluded unless he or she has a sufficient level of knowledge in order to 'read' and judge a particular painting. However, the same could be said of food and travel behaviour. Urry's (1990) concept of 'the tourist gaze' reveals how tourism is a social practice that assumes an understanding of how to behave in a particular place, and how to look at and relate oneself to the various attractions while on holiday (Bærenholdt, 2003). In relation to food and drink, we could also argue for the existence of a tourist *graze*, as the ability to enjoy a sophisticated restaurant depends upon our knowledge of the appropriate social conduct for the situation, as well as our ability to select the right wine and understand the technical descriptions on the menu. This is particularly evident through the way in which we respond to foods considered to be 'exotic' or 'ethnic' as Hage (1997) has remarked in relation to the phenomenon of 'cosmo-multiculturalism' – the fashion for new types of ethnic dining experiences – among Sydney residents.

> *"Accompanying this process is the emergence of an aristocracy of cosmo-multicultural producers and consumers who set themselves up simply and subtly as 'those who know how to do it best' and a hierarchy of those who possess 'more' or 'less' cosmo-multicultural capital.*

Officially and popularly recognised cosmo-multicultural high priests

emerge, acquiring the recognised power to classify, judge and rank, and

therefore the capacity to allow or disallow eating experiences, which also

involves making and unmaking restaurants, for those who have the

capacity to appreciate them" (Hage, 1997 p.124).

Further support for Bourdieu's ideas comes from Warde and Martens (2000) who suggest that, in contemporary society, there are so many different styles of dining that it becomes hard to earn the approval of one's peers by sticking to just one of these styles. They argue that, for those wanting to attain higher social status, variety is, indeed, the spice of life. These people demonstrate their superior skills, judgement and purchasing power by regularly selecting from a range of eating out options in accordance with what they consider to be right for that particular occasion. *"Thus command of variety becomes a key form of social and symbolic capital"* (Warde and Martens, 2000 p.79).

By using questionnaires to investigate the ways in which dining out practices varied according to income, age, occupation and educational credentials, Warde and Martens were able to discover what they describe as *"prima facie evidence that a distinct and comparatively privileged section of the population achieves greatest variety of experience"* (Warde and Martens, 2000 p.80). So who were these privileged few? Although all the factors listed above were found to have some impact, Warde and Martens discovered clear support for Bourdieu's theories because *"the social indicator which was often the most important discriminator in practice was the level of educational qualification.*

This corroborates the view that food practice, and especially eating out, is a field characterised by the circulation of cultural capital" (Warde and Martens, 2000 p.222).

2.5.1 Distinction between places and cuisines

Viewed on a wider level, it is not just consumers who use food and tourism to distinguish themselves. As Section 2.9 discusses, a literature is currently emerging around the growth of the local food industry, whereby small producers choose to focus upon qualities of place and tradition which, they claim, distinguish their products from those produced by more conventional farming methods (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000, Marsden, 2004, Harvey *et al.*, 2004). By distinguishing themselves in this way, they are able to add value to their products and address the problem of falling incomes experienced by the industrial agricultural sector (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005, Renting *et al.*, 2003). Distinction can therefore be important to producers as well as consumers.

According to Bell and Valentine (1997) and Hage (1997), different regions also employ different food and tourism practices to distinguish themselves from their competitors in the global market place. Tourism is a notoriously fickle, highly competitive industry and, if resorts are to create and maintain a growth in visitor numbers, they must find strategies which help them to stand out. This results in what Urry (1990) has described as 'tourism reflexivity': *"the set of disciplines, procedures and criteria that enable each (and every?) place to monitor, evaluate and develop its 'tourism potential' within the emerging patterns of global tourism"* (Urry, 1990 p.2). For example, when cheaper air

fares made foreign travel more accessible in the 1950s, popular English seaside resorts of the nineteenth century, such as Bournemouth and Blackpool, were faced with falling numbers of visitors and had to find other ways to distinguish themselves. Both towns now rely heavily on their ability to host major conferences as well as their reputation for providing a lively nightlife to ensure that visitor numbers are maintained.

Food is another important strategy that destinations can use to distinguish themselves. Hage (1997) explains that Sydney's efforts to develop a reputation for a wide range of high quality multicultural cuisines is an important strategy to enable the city to compete more effectively for tourists in the global market place. Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) also argue that a similar process has taken place in relation to Canadian food tourism. They describe the efforts that the country's food and tourism experts went to in order to find a suitable image through which to market Canada. The problem they faced was that Canada has a long history of immigration that has resulted in a very diverse cuisine. There is therefore no single Canadian cuisine which can be used as an icon for the country. However, instead of seeing this as problematic, tourism chiefs decided that *"the strength of cuisine in Canada is its diversity, and that should be promoted"* (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006 p.49). In order for such branding to become truly effective, Hashimoto and Telfer explain that it must become the 'personality' of a place, to which the consumer can relate.

It could also be argued that UK tourism officials have followed a similar strategy as Visit Britain's Taste England campaign (Visit Britain, 2006a)

attempts to make the most of the UK's varied cuisine – from traditional favourites such as Cheddar cheese and Cumberland sausage through to the multicultural delights of curries in Birmingham. A parallel example is that of landscape, where tourist boards use the wide range of scenic delights on offer in a place to attract visitors. Television adverts for Scotland have demonstrated this through images that include the historical and cultural attractions of Edinburgh as well as the wilder beauty of the rugged Highland landscapes.

The fact that both food/drink and travel behaviour involve issues of social distinction results in difficult choices for providers and consumers. The proliferation of different styles of holidaying and eating means that, in theory at least, a seemingly endless array of combinations are possible, and all of them will impact on the ways in which we are perceived by others. The following section thus turns to consider the ways in which we classify – and make decisions about – styles of eating and travel.

2.6 Traveller and tourist, Self and Other – making judgements about food and travel

Academic efforts to understand people's food and travel behaviour have often been based upon dichotomies – opposing categories that endeavour to describe the key axes around which decisions are made. For example, in relation to food, Warde (1997) has argued that we make our choices on the basis of what he calls the 'four antinomies of taste': novelty and tradition, convenience and care, health and indulgence, and economy and

extravagance. These antinomies describe how attitudes to food vary, both between individuals and through time. For example, Warde's analysis of the recipe columns in women's magazines revealed that, although a recipe might be recommended one week on the basis that it was cheap and convenient to prepare – thus placing this meal firmly towards the economy and convenience ends of the spectra – another issue might suggest a different dish as a way to spoil your family on a special occasion – hence bringing extravagance and care to the forefront.

However, Warde's research also shows that food choices are underlain by implicit moral judgements about the way things 'should' be. As a result, he argues that people tend to display somewhat ambivalent attitudes to the antinomies by switching between them at different times. For example, while women's magazines were quick to promote convenience foods and labour-saving devices on some occasions, Warde found that they would also emphasise the importance of being a good wife and mother – a job which, when 'done properly', was seen to involve time and effort spent cooking complex and 'proper' meals for the family. Similar ideas also recur in Warde's later work with Martens (2000) where, although interviewees said they liked to indulge when eating out – with many saying that they ate more on such occasions than they would do at home – they also confessed to feeling guilty about such indulgences, with some claiming to eat less the following day as compensation.

It is also possible to see evidence of similar judgements operating in tourism where morality has played a central role in the distinction between 'the traveller' and 'the tourist'. Rojek (1993) describes how, in the travel literature of the late 19th and 20th centuries: *"Tourists are presented as lacking initiative and discrimination. They are unadventurous, unimaginative and insipid. For them, travel experience is akin to grazing – they mechanically consume whatever the tour operator feeds them."* However, by contrast: *"The traveller is associated with refined values of discernment, respect and taste. Travel is seen as pursuing the ageless aristocratic principle of broadening the mind"* (Rojek, 1993 p.175). Such judgements stem from the so-called 'Grand Tours' of the Enlightenment, when travel provided a means for members of the aristocracy to spend long periods of time in Europe. These tours were all about education, with a strong focus on art and literature and the goal of accumulating as much cultural capital as possible. Travelling in this way was considered to be part of learning to be a gentleman. However, you also had to be a gentleman already in order to appreciate the experience because travel, according to popular belief, was wasted upon the 'lower classes'.

Rojek (1993) explains how such attitudes persist today, with tourists being classified as irresponsible, passive pleasure-seekers who demonstrate no personal initiative. He draws on ideas of the post-tourist (Urry, 1995) to argue that this judgement is not necessarily fair, because many tourists are aware of the staged nature of tourist experiences and are perfectly capable of being critical about what they see. However, it could also be argued that class judgements can be linked to one's eating practices. Just as those who indulge

in mass package holidays are scorned, so are the visitors who demand fish-and-chips with lager while holidaying in Tenerife – the subtext being that a 'better class' of traveller would opt to eat the local food of the destination instead.

Such moral judgements relate to the ways in which we position ourselves in the world. As a result, they can be linked to another dichotomy that has been prevalent within the tourism literature – namely the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider', 'Self' and 'Other'. Bourdieu (1984) emphasises that we define ourselves in opposition to others – we know what we are, or aspire to become, because we know what we are not. We can therefore define ourselves, firstly, by where we holiday and, secondly, by how we eat when we get there, and the same can apply to our eating out practices at home. As Germann Molz (2004) explains in her study of Americans choosing to dine out in Thai restaurants:

> *"The meaning making that occurs in a tourist site has more to do with the self than the other. The tourist's project is to understand and locate the self, and this project often takes place in relation to the other… Not only can the notion of exotic be defined only against what the tourist understands as everyday, but any experience of the other is necessarily viewed through the tourist's own historically and culturally located lens. Sometimes an encounter with the other is needed to bring the tourist's own cultural identity into better focus. This is what occurs in Thai restaurants, where diners, while experiencing a taste of Thai culture, are*

really validating their own individual identity and affiliating themselves

with a particularly American identity" (Germann Molz, 2004 p.66).

This example also serves to illustrate the way in which *"our perceptions of an other are uniquely our own"* (Long, 2004b p.34). Therefore what counts as an 'exotic' food or holiday destination – and equally who is an insider and who is an outsider in any given situation – is dependent on our own history of experiences, and these categories can be redefined in response to events.

A similar point can be made in relation to a further dichotomy which has become instrumental within the food and tourism literature – that of the contrast between the 'different' and the 'familiar'. For example, Ryan (2002a) asks the question of what it is that makes holidays so potentially special, and concludes that a crucial factor is the way they encourage reflection by placing us in situations that are removed from those of everyday life. Urry also claims that *"Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary"* (Urry, 1990 p.11). Such arguments suggest that, in order to fully understand a person's holiday behaviour, tourism researchers should reflect, not only on that person's holiday activities and feelings, but also on how those experiences compare to life back home.

"While the life changing experiences of a Shirley Valentine are not the norm, one cannot help asking the question, what is it about holidays that can potentially cause such change? In what ways do these periods of escape allow people to examine themselves and come to such drastic

decisions? And… surely such a circumstance only has meaning in the

wider context of the non-holiday daily life of people?" (Ryan, 2002b p.3).

Both the food and the tourism literatures have therefore focused on the question of how people respond to the familiar and the different, the safe and the adventurous. For example, Plog's (1974) attempt to establish why some people were flying while others were not resulted in a distinction between the psychocentric person – who is inclined to be nervous and who prefers safer, more predictable travel experiences – and the allocentric person, who is self-confident and adventurous in everyday life and who prefers different holidays involving new experiences. Cohen (1972) also explained that, while a certain degree of novelty is an essential part of the tourist experience, not everyone is willing to expose themselves to what can seem different and strange – hence the need for an 'environmental bubble' which will afford some degree of security for the tourist through which he or she can appreciate a selection of controlled differences without feeling intimidated.

In relation to food, Fischler (1988) also distinguishes between people with 'neophobic' and 'neophilic' tastes in order to describe how willing – or otherwise – they are to try new foods, and this is a concept that is developed by Cohen and Avieli (2004) in a paper which emphasises that holiday foods and drinks can be an impediment as well as an attraction for visitors. The authors explain that their paper was motivated by their observations of delegates while attending a local food and tourism conference that was held in Cyprus in 2000.

"A quick survey among the participants revealed that most of the participants did not eat independently even once in a local restaurant that was not tourism-oriented. Clearly, even for experts in the field, 'local food' becomes acceptable only if it is to some extent transformed" (Cohen and Avieli, 2004 p.756).

Cohen and Avieli go on to explain that food can be a source of real anxiety for visitors while on holiday because, unlike the traditional practice of *gazing*, which involves minimal bodily involvement with the surroundings, *grazing* involves a much higher level of risk because you are physically consuming something and, if it disagrees with you, the rest of your holiday could be spoilt. Such anxieties are not just created by the food itself – visitors can also be intimidated by unfamiliar social practices that surround eating, such as an absence of cutlery or the need to sit on the floor in a restaurant, or by communication barriers such as the language used on the menu. The authors conclude that, if a tourism destination is to grow, it is essential to develop restaurants that go some way towards bridging the gap between the 'Self' and the 'Other' so that tourists can feel more comfortable. For example, it might be wise to translate menus into a language that the visitor can understand, reduce the spiciness of some dishes and replace what visitors may consider to be 'unacceptable' ingredients with alternatives. However, they argue that making such compromises is a delicate process because, if a place changes too much and is considered too 'touristy', visitors may avoid it on the grounds that it lacks authenticity (Section 2.10).

Indeed, when it comes to variety and difference, it appears that less is sometimes more. Warde and Martens (2000) found that some degree of difference from the norm was a crucial component of eating out. However, there also had to be some familiar aspects to the experience so that customers knew what to expect. They discovered that the desire for variety could therefore be satisfied by a number of subtle changes – perhaps by dressing up to eat out, or the act of choosing to have a different sauce with your steak – even the fact that someone else has done the cooking and washing up can have an impact. In short:

"Variety can be simulated by events. Each event is different, unique in its temporal location, potentially distinctive and memorable precisely because of its uniqueness" (Warde and Martens, 2000 p.218).

As these examples show, attempts to define 'Self' and 'Other', 'traveller' and 'tourist', or 'different' and 'familiar' are inevitably going to be subjective, with an individual's responses depending on his or her prior experiences and cultural background. Such definitions can also change through time as we encounter new experiences that encourage us to reformulate our understandings of what is 'normal' or 'usual' and what is 'extraordinary' and 'exotic'. A good example of the difficulties involved in such distinctions is Germann Molz's study of round-the-world travellers' attitudes to McDonald's restaurants (Germann Molz, 2005). Like Warde (1997) discovered in his study of recipe columns in women's magazines, Germann Molz found that travellers displayed

ambivalent responses towards McDonald's that reflected their attitudes to globalisation more generally. This meant that the restaurants could be welcomed as comforting and familiar reminders of home at the same time as they were despised for symbolising the worst aspects of trends towards global homogenisation. However, Germann Molz also discovered that travellers' perceptions would change with their desires and circumstances, so that a visit to McDonald's might seem unappealing the week after leaving home but be welcomed by the end of a long, round-the-world trip spent experiencing 'different' cultures. In short:

> *"McDonald's is not inherently a global icon or a symbol of the local or an enclave of 'homeliness'. Instead, the way these spatialisations and related emotions are performed in each traveller's narrative depends on where the traveller comes from, on how far (geographically and emotionally) from home the traveller feels, on how different or familiar the location seems to be, and on the traveller's trajectory (where she is, has been, or wants to go)"* (Germann Molz, 2005 p.66).

The preceding sections have highlighted a number of ways in which social relations are involved in the consumption of food and tourism services. However, in order to provide a further illustration of the importance of understanding these social relations, the second part of this chapter extends the discussion by exploring some specific aspects of the literature that are relevant to this thesis – firstly, through a review of the literature that relates to wine tourism, secondly through an overview of theories relating to the

sociology of food consumption, thirdly through an analysis of the debate which surrounds the idea of 'local' food and the rise of 'alternative food networks' and, finally, through an examination of the role of authenticity within tourism.

2.7. Wine tourism

Recent years have seen an extensive literature develop around the emergence of the wine tourism industry. There are many parallels between wine tourism and food tourism and, as a result, this literature has much to contribute to an analysis of people's eating and travel practices. Wine tourism is defined by Hall *et al.* (2002a) as *"visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors"* (Hall *et al.*, 2002a p.3). It is thought that excursions to vineyards as part of organised travel go back as far as the Grand Tours of the Enlightenment, and possibly even to the days of ancient Greece and Rome. However, wine did not play a key role in travel until the mid 19th century when improvements in transport and the growth of a new middle class meant that visits to vineyards were no longer restricted to the aristocracy (Hall *et al.*, 2002a). Today, wine tourism is a rapidly developing industry, with wine trails being launched throughout the wine producing heartland of Europe as well as in 'New World' wine regions, such as the Napa Valley, in California (Hall *et al.*, 2002b). There is even a fledgling wine tourism industry developing in the UK (Howley and Van Westering, 2002).

Like food tourism, wine tourism is often regarded as an effective means of promoting economic development in rural regions as producers are able to diversify their enterprises and add value to their sales (Getz and Brown, 2006, Brewer, 2003, Dodd, 2002, Hall *et al.*, 2002c, Hall *et al.*, 2002d, Cambourne and Macionis, 2002). As described by Frochot (2002) and Hall *et al.* (2002d) the wine industry is characterised by increasing numbers of micro-producers and, for these small businesses, cellar door sales to tourists can be an important way of increasing profit margins, getting consumer feedback on new products and building brand awareness for their wines. Of course, there are disadvantages for producers, as attracting tourists to the winery can require extra investment in staff and visitor facilities and take time away from the core business of wine making. As a result *"the way in which wine tourism is utilised as a business strategy… depends on a mix of factors, including desired economies of scale, business strategies and, for many small owner-operated wineries, lifestyle choice"* (Hall *et al.*, 2002a p.12).

However, as a tool for rural development, the advantages of wine tourism go beyond the benefits it offers to individual producers. This is because wine tourism is about more than just visiting wineries and trying wine. In reality, the attraction of wine tourism involves a wider appreciation of a region's distinguishing markers – including its cultural, social and environmental characteristics. As Brewer argues, there is a sense in which *"the very nature of the wine industry lends itself to a marriage with tourism. Wine is a beverage that is associated with relaxation, communing with others, complementary to food consumption, learning about new things, and hospitality"* (Brewer, 2003

p.423). Williams (2001) studied the imagery used to promote wine regions to tourists during the 1990s. He found that, at the beginning of the decade, the images used focused almost exclusively on the regions' role as wine producing areas, with lots of pictures of the techniques of wine making. However, by the late 1990s, this imagery had shifted away from the specifics of wine making in favour of a more lifestyle-oriented, 'experiential' approach which showed visitors walking, cycling, visiting local cultural sites and generally enjoying the attractions of the region. In short, the emphasis moved towards portraying wine tourism destinations as *"places with unique natural and cultural characters worth visiting because of their experiential, educational and leisure appeal"* (Williams, 2001 p.50). Similar arguments have been made by Carmichael (2005), who argues that wine tourism is transforming production-oriented agricultural areas into consumption-oriented areas for visitors.

Therefore, at the most fundamental level, wine tourism, like food tourism, is about consuming places as well as products (Urry, 1995). Consequently, promoting place distinctiveness is a vital part of any wine tourism enterprise, as Hall *et al.* have argued: *"Wine and tourism are both products which are differentiated on the basis of regional identity… It should therefore be of little surprise that the relationship between wine and tourism is extremely significant at a regional level through the contribution that regionality provides for product branding, place promotion and, through these mechanisms, economic development"* (Hall *et al.*, 2002c p.196). At the heart of wine tourism, then, is the concept of *terroir* – the idea that a region's specific

environmental, social and cultural characteristics have come together to make a unique and quality wine. As Brewer describes in relation to wine routes: *"The concept of a bounded space is vital to the idea of a wine route since it defines for its wine producing members an identity that proclaims unique attributes for their wines and cultural heritage"* (Brewer, 2003 p.424). It is this distinctive regional identity, as well as the wines themselves, that can be enjoyed by tourists visiting the region (Preston-Whyte, 2002, Cambourne *et al.*, 2002). For example, Frochot's study of wine tourism in France illustrates that wine tourism seldom acts as a 'stand-alone' visitor activity – instead, it forms part of a package of regional historical and cultural attractions to be appreciated by visitors (Frochot, 2002). Such ideas of place distinctiveness are also playing an increasingly important role in food production, with consumers showing a renewed enthusiasm for food products which are perceived to be 'traditional' and 'local', as will be discussed in Section 2.9.

However, there are further parallels with food tourism in that wine tourism is an inherently sensual, experiential activity which requires a high degree of involvement from the visitor. Visitors to wineries are not just involved in 'gazing' (Urry, 1990) – instead, they are encouraged to taste, touch, smell and listen as they explore the wine production process and appreciate the landscapes of the region (Cambourne and Macionis, 2002, Carmichael, 2005, Brewer, 2003). This bid to engage all the senses has led some wineries to develop additional attractions such as restaurants and art galleries, as described by Whyte (2002).

Research has also focused upon trying to draw up a profile of the 'typical' wine tourist, with most studies stating that high levels of income and educational qualifications are good indicators (Dodd, 2002). However, it is clear that, as with food tourism, visitors can engage with wine tourism on a number of levels – from those who just want to taste wine and look around the vineyard, to more experienced wine enthusiasts who want to expand their knowledge of wine production (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002). Whatever the level of engagement, many theorists agree that wine tourism is not a passive process. Instead, *"the consumer is highly involved in the production of the experience"* (Carmichael, 2005 p.201).

More 'experiential' research perspectives therefore highlight the fact that wine tourism is not just about the attractions present at the winery – instead, it is about the internal motivations that the visitor brings to the experience – for example, the desire to socialise, learn more about wine and meet the producer (Mitchell *et al.*, 2002, Sparks, 2007).Such ideas about involvement have led Cambourne *et al.* to claim that the existing definition of wine tourism should be extended to allow for the fact that people are not just wine tourists when they visit vineyards – instead, they argue that people can be wine tourists at other times and in other places – for example, when enjoying wine with regional foods in a restaurant, or when they are back home and they open a bottle of the wine they purchased from a particular vineyard while on holiday. In short:

"When people purchase wine they are buying much more than a physical product, they are consuming images, lifestyles, experiences and places, what we would more prosaically describe as the 'romance of the vine'. When people visit winescapes, and interact with their components, such as wineries, and purchase wine, they are taking their memories home in a bottle – and they can keep doing so for many years to come every time they purchase, even though they may never come into contact with that place again" (Cambourne *et al.*, 2002 p.319).

These ideas of memory, place distinctiveness and consumer involvement recur throughout this thesis, and show that the literature surrounding wine tourism has many parallels with the literature on food tourism. The following sections of this chapter develop this analysis by considering wider aspects of the literature, beginning with those relating to the sociology of food consumption.

2.8. The sociology of food consumption

As discussed previously, the study of food consumption is a relatively new subject for sociological research. Mennell *et al.* (1992) suggest that food studies have been neglected by sociologists in the past for a variety of reasons. They point out that, for much of history *"the importance of meals and commensality in the social life of most human societies were so obvious that they were simply taken for granted"* (Mennell *et al.*, 1992 p.1) and that this, combined with the fact that food preparation has traditionally been perceived as being 'women's work', has led to food studies being omitted from the

broader sociological research agenda. However, recent years have seen an increased interest in food as a subject for study and, according to Mennell *et al.* (1992), it is possible to discern three distinct theoretical approaches to food studies within sociology.

Firstly, there are those accounts based upon a functionalist understanding of food, such as the work of Audrey Richards (1932). Richards' work on South African tribes explored the ways in which food practices were related to the structures of – and interpersonal relationships within – the social groups of the tribes. In doing so, she analysed the food choices of these social groups through an understanding of their place in the psychological and social context of the tribes being studied (Richards, 1939).

According to Mennell *et al.* (1992), such studies can be distinguished from those taking a more structuralist approach to the understanding of food consumption. These studies *"recognise that 'taste' is culturally shaped and socially controlled"* (Mennell *et al.*, 1992 p.8) and, as a consequence, structuralist accounts have tended to focus on the social rules surrounding food consumption. Examples of this kind of analysis include the work of Lévi-Strauss (1966), whose discussion of the 'culinary triangle' attempts to link societal ideas about raw, cooked and rotten foods to our thinking about the nature versus culture debate. Other prominent structuralists include Mary Douglas, whose influential article 'Deciphering a meal' (1972) involved an examination of the food system at work within her own family household. Douglas's work highlights the system of social rules that lies behind people's

everyday food choices as her analysis shows how certain social events are marked by particular forms of food consumption. Christmas dinner, for example, is associated with a very specific kind of meal, while even daily food events such as breakfast and dinner are associated with particular foods and practices of consumption (Douglas, 1984). Douglas also highlights how the social rules surrounding food serve to define who is included and who is excluded on any particular occasion. For example, you may offer drinks and snacks to minor acquaintances, work colleagues or tradesmen, whereas full meals are generally only shared with close friends and relatives or particularly valued guests.

According to Mennell *et al* (1992), structuralist understandings of food consumption are also evident in Barthes' analysis of the symbolism which lies behind food advertising and cookery writing (1957), while Bourdieu's discussions on the role of 'taste' and distinction in relation to people's food choices can also be argued to contain some characteristics of structuralism because of the ways in which he describes tastes as being reproduced across the generations (Bourdieu, 1984).

The final kind of theoretical approach identified by Mennell *et al.* (1992) is the developmentalist perspectives adopted by researchers such as Goody (1982) and Mennell (1985). In common with structuralist approaches, developmentalists acknowledge the ways in which food's symbolic associations can influence human behaviour (Mennell *et al.*, 1992). However, both Goody (1982) and Mennell (1985) go further by looking at the ways in

which societies' cuisines change over time as a result of changes in political, economic and social circumstances. For example, Mennell's book 'All Manners of Food' is an in-depth analysis which investigates why an elite cuisine developed in French society while this was not the case in England. His explanation rests upon a detailed understanding of the processes of social differentiation at work in both countries, where differences in competition within the various kinds of social stratification operating in the two societies led to a divergence in the culinary cultures that developed.

Across these theoretical approaches, researchers interested in the sociology of food have tackled a number of subjects, from the historical development of different national cuisines, as examined by Mennell (1985), to the impact of colonisation and migration on food cultures (Levenstein, 1985, Hage, 1997). Feminist approaches have also been important in relation to studies of eating disorders (Bordo, 1992, Chernin, 1992) and the role of women within the kitchen (Charles and Kerr, 1986b, Murcott, 1983b).

Of particular interest to the present study is the body of literature which seeks to explore the meanings and social rules behind the increasingly popular pastime of 'eating out'. As discussed previously, Warde and Martens (2000) have made an important contribution to this field of study. However, other theorists have also explored this area through their work – from Tinker's study of the role of street foods in medieval Europe, which shows that eating out is not an exclusively modern phenomenon (Tinker, 1987), through to studies of the contemporary culture surrounding the humble fish and chip shop

(Priestland, 1972, Reiter, 1991). Within the restaurant itself, the role of waiters has also been the subject of a number of studies, including the work of Mars and Nicod (1984) and, of course, Goffman's famous study of waiters moving between the 'back' region of the kitchen and the 'front' region of the dining area (Goffman, 1971). However, one of the most notable studies of restaurant culture itself comes from Joanne Finklestein (1989) who argues that dining out involves the 'commodification' of our emotions and is *"a means by which personal desires find their shape and satisfaction through the prescribed forms of social conduct"* (Finkelstein, 1989 p.4). In this way, Finklestein argues that, while choices about where to eat out and what to have from the menu may appear to be matters of personal taste and preference, the restaurant is actually a very artificial environment where we unthinkingly follow fashions and imitate our fellow diners without questioning the beliefs and values that lie behind our behaviour. According to Finklestein, eating out is a highly performative practice in which we are constantly under surveillance from our fellow diners and the restaurant staff. De Certeau, Giard and Mayo (1998) make a similar point. Their research into everyday practices such as shopping, cooking and walking around the city revealed that, unless we want to be ostracised or marked out as deviant in some way, we always adhere to certain social rules about how such everyday activities should be performed. For example, in relation to cooking:

"Culinary preparation imposes a coercive series inside of which the various elements can no longer be rearranged: in France, one does not begin the meal by what is served as dessert, one does not serve the

cheese before the meat, and so on. Otherwise, the meal would be

perceived as disordered, "improper," and in any case, as something "not

to be repeated," in short, a sort of obscenity" (De Certeau, 1998 p.85).

Such discussion of the social rules around cooking and eating has led other theorists to examine the role of women within the kitchen. As Mennell *et al.* argue, there is a sense in which the kitchen is at the centre of the household as food is used to create and maintain social relations within the family and, traditionally at least, women have played a crucial role in this process (Mennell *et al.*, 1992, Murcott, 1983b). For example, Murcott (1982) argues that the act of producing a cooked dinner is a means of 'creating family' because it symbolises the home and the family members' roles within it. Indeed, by looking at the toy pots and pans given to little girls, Sharpe (1976) explores how women are socialised into this role from an early age. Mennell *et al.* (1992) also highlight the fact that women tend to be perceived as "cooks", while men are "chefs", and that women will often continue to take responsibility for preparing meals even when they are in full-time employment. Furthermore, they argue that, although the proliferation of domestic labour-saving devices such as the dishwasher and microwave have, in theory, made food preparation easier and quicker for women, this is not, in fact, the case, because the existence of such technology means that women are now expected to produce more complex and refined dishes than ever before.

Charles and Kerr (1988) have studied food systems at the level of the household and have analysed the ways in which food is distributed among the

family (Charles and Kerr, 1986a). They found that, where particular foods such as meat were concerned, the men would be served first, followed by children and, finally, the women themselves. It is also argued that women are in a difficult position in relation to food: *"women are expected to deny themselves food in order to remain slim and therefore sexually attractive and, at the same time, they have to feed their partners with healthy and nutritious meals"* (Mennell *et al.*, 1992 p.92).

Studies of women's relationship to food are equally important in analyses which attempt to understand the increased phenomenon of eating disorders. Mennell (1987) takes a historical perspective on anorexia by looking at the longer-term changes that have occurred in relation to people's appetites. His argument is that, in the Middle Ages, the predominant concern was with the external constraints which were operating on food supply. For the majority of people, food supplies were irregular and shortages were common. As a result, the upper classes sought to display their superior social status by consuming copious amounts of food as publicly as possible. Consequently, being plump was fashionable and regarded as a sign that the individual was wealthy enough to eat heartily. However, Mennell argues that, from the late 17th century onwards, improvements in agriculture, the extension of trade and a more peaceable political climate fostered by the process of state formation meant that food supplies were becoming more secure and consistent. Shortages became more uncommon and it was no longer just the wealthy who could afford to eat well. However, this meant that the upper classes had to find other ways of distinguishing themselves via their food consumption choices

and Mennell argues that, from this point onwards, those wishing to distinguish themselves began to focus on quality and refinement in their eating practices. In this way, self-control became fashionable while gluttony was considered vulgar.

This trend can be argued to have continued to the present day as research shows that eating disorders are most prevalent among young, white, affluent women (Crisp, 1977, Willi and Grossman, 1983). A number of studies point to the ever-increasing fashion for thinness in contemporary society (Bruch, 1978, Garner *et al.*, 1980, Button and Whitehouse, 1981), with many authors arguing that thinness is not only about physical attractiveness – instead, they point to the fact that a slim physique is associated with virtues of self control and successfulness, while obesity is associated with laziness and a lack of control (Bordo, 1992). Such accounts only serve to emphasise the point that *"the amount of food humans eat is not simply determined by biological factors, but is heavily influenced by cultural, social and psychological pressures"* (Mennell *et al.*, 1992 p.48).

The role of social factors in relation to food choices is also highlighted by discussions about the related subject of 'health' foods. It is argued that technological developments surrounding the production, processing and preservation of foodstuffs – such as additives, flavourings and genetic modification – were intended to make food consumption and preparation more convenient and pleasurable (Mennell *et al.*, 1992). However, researchers interested in the sociology of people's food choices point that, in many cases,

such developments have made contemporary consumers increasingly worried about the safety of what they are eating (Farrer, 1983, Millstone, 1986, Boniface, 2003). For example, Belasco (1989) has linked developments such as the rise of macrobiotics and the wholefoods movement with a reaction to what are perceived to be the dangers of 'unnatural' contemporary eating practices. Equally, studies of modern vegetarianism have equated such food choices with attempts to recapture a 'pure' form of living that is untainted by the overly processed and manufactured nature of contemporary food production.

Such studies can, of course, be linked to the resurgence of interest in 'local' and 'traditional' foods. Recent years have seen a small but significant literature develop around the subject of these 'alternative food networks', as the following section will discuss.

2.9. Why place really does matter – the renaissance of 'local' food

As highlighted in Section 2.2.2, there is a literature which argues that globalisation has re-valorised the 'local' and the 'regional', with the result that we are now seeing a growing market for foods considered to be traditional and local (Bell and Valentine, 1997 p.134, Boniface, 2003, Ilbery *et al.*, 2005). Morgan *et al.* (2006) have argued that it is possible to distinguish between a 'conventional' food sector – which is dominated by productivist agriculture and large-scale producing, processing and retailing on a national and global scale – and an 'alternative' sector, which is associated with a more ecological approach to production, and where smaller companies are involved in

producing and retailing food for localised markets. As discussed later in this section, the notion of separate 'alternative' and 'conventional' food sectors is now disputed. However, the motives and discourses behind the concept of 'alternativeness' can still be useful, as explained here.

According to Marsden (2004), the alternative sector is characterised by its use of short food supply chains (SFSCs) which, refers to the relatively few number of links between producer and consumer, rather than the spatial extent of the chain *per se*. Marsden identifies three kinds of SFSCs, which can be distinguished by their differing use of time and space. 'Face-to-face' SFSCs operate at the very local level. Here, consumers purchase products directly from the producer – at farmers' markets, for example, or through 'pick-your-own' schemes – and, as a result, *"authenticity and trust are mediated through personal interaction"* (Marsden, 2004 p.132). By contrast, 'proximate' SFSCs operate on a slightly larger scale, where producers circulate products more widely throughout the region, often making use of intermediate actors, such as local shop owners or restaurateurs, who take on the role of guaranteeing product authenticity. The final kind of SFSC is the 'extended' SFSC, where products are transported beyond the region and sold via national or international markets to customers who may never have visited their place of origin. Although these 'local' products may be travelling quite long distances, their supply chains remain short and the product's packaging still conveys extensive information about the place and process that produced it. According to Marsden: *"This enables the consumer to make local connections with the place/space of production and, potentially, with the values of the people*

involved and the production methods employed" (Marsden, 2004 p.134). Such an analysis has much in common with Urry's mobilities paradigm whereby *"cultural objects are variably on the move and… they may hold their meaning as they move and are moved around"* (Urry, 2007 p.34).

However, regardless of the type of supply chain involved, the rise of such 'alternative food networks' (AFNs) is generally considered to be the result of increasing pressures on the conventional farming sector, with Boniface (2003) citing a widespread consumer reaction against what she sees as the failures of industrial agriculture, including food scares such as foot and mouth and the BSE crisis. A central argument of her book is that *"a considerable counter-revolution against food industrialisation has appeared and that this is a main trigger to food and drink tourism emerging"* (Boniface, 2003 p.4). For Boniface, the interest in local food is motivated, firstly, by fears about food safety and, secondly, by an increasing dissatisfaction with what Ritzer (2000) refers to as the McDonalidization of society, where foods and places are seen to become more homogenous throughout the world. She argues that this explains why the types of food sought by the tourist are often traditional, old-fashioned and locally produced on a small scale. *"These cater, therefore, to provide comfort against society perceptions of concern in relation to quality or safety of food treated industrially, more 'anonymously', and which has been carried long distance and so is removed from place of origin and doorstep attention"* (Boniface, 2003 p.11).

Morris and Buller (2003) also point to a loss of consumer confidence in the conventional food sector, while Ilbery *et al.* (2005) agree that the expansion of industrial agriculture has led to consumers becoming increasingly alienated from the processes and places involved in contemporary food production. This is in contrast to AFNs which, Marsden (2004) argues, provide a way to reconnect consumers with the food chain.

> *"A key characteristic of emerging supply chains is their potential capacity to re-socialise, or re-spatialise, food, thereby allowing the consumer to make different value judgements about the relative desirability and quality of foods on the basis of their own knowledge, experience or perceived imagery"* (Marsden, 2004 p.131).

Similar arguments about increasing public anxiety over the industrialisation of agriculture and the need to forge new forms of connection between consumers and food producers have also been made by Kneafsey *et al.* (2004). However, from a producer perspective, the growth of AFNs can also be explained by the need to counteract the falling prices experienced by producers operating in the 'conventional' sector (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005, Morris and Buller, 2003, Defra, 2003). Marsden (2004) claims that the UK government's lenient interpretation of European competition policy has disadvantaged producers while allowing supermarkets and other major food retailers to occupy an increasingly dominant position in the market. As a result, incomes in farming have continued to fall with Pretty (2001, cited in Ilbery *et al.* 2005) claiming that, in the UK, only around 7.5 per cent of the final retail price of

food returns to farmers, as opposed to a figure of 50 per cent more than 60 years ago.

Producers, it is argued, can escape this spiral of declining prices and bring added value to their sales by choosing to produce products that emphasise locality, tradition or environmentally-friendly production processes (Buller and Morris, 2004). For example, Tregear *et al.* (2007) view regional and local foods as a form of cultural capital that can be used to create wider economic and social benefits for rural areas, while the government's Policy Commission on Farming and Food report took a similar view: *"We believe that one of the greatest opportunities for farmers to add value and retain a bigger slice of retail prices is to build on the public's enthusiasm for locally-produced food, or food with a clear regional provenance"* (Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002 p.43). This process of 'adding value' through local foods does not only benefit the farmer. According to new European research, local food projects can also play a key role in developing what is now described as 'Integrated Rural Tourism' (IRT). Often described as "all-round sustainable tourism" (Clark and Chabrel, 2007, Ilbery *et al.*, 2007), IRT is focused upon achieving all-round social, economic and environmental benefits on the understanding that *"the best form of tourism would be one which achieves gains on all dimensions and for all groups"* (Clark and Chabrel, 2007 p.372). Therefore, IRT is about creating thriving rural communities and enhancing the local environment, economy and culture, and local food and drink projects can play an important role in this because they can embrace all these concerns simultaneously. Interestingly, this idea of 'all-round

sustainability' is also integral to the aims of the Slow Food movement – a worldwide initiative which is concerned about the environmental and social consequences of a fast-paced, heavily industrialised food system. In its place, the Slow Food campaign *"envisions a future food system that is based on the principles of high quality and taste, environmental sustainability, and social justice – in essence, a food system that is [good, clean and fair]."* (Slow Food USA, 2008).

The reason that local and regional foods are able to add value for farmers, tourists and the rural community more generally is, once again, a result of the importance of distinction for producers and consumers alike. By choosing to emphasise factors such as place of origin, traditional production methods or strong environmental credentials, a product can be made to stand out from its 'placeless', industrially-produced equivalents. Having made such a distinction, the producer can then charge premium prices, as Ilbery *et al.* (2005) describe: *"For those operating at the 'production' end of the food chain, the notion of 'difference' becomes critical to the process of reconnection: creating a difference in 'quality' between specific products and mass-produced products; creating a difference between geographic anonymity in food provenance and territorial specificity; and creating a difference in the way certain foods are produced"* (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005 p.118).

Both Ilbery *et al.* (2005) and Marsden (2004) argue that two basic kinds of distinction strategy can be employed by producers who choose to operate in AFNs. The first is a strategy that focuses upon the links between product and

place. Examples of this sort of strategy include the decision to obtain some kind of place-based certification for a product, such as that offered by the European Union's PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) schemes, in order to enhance a region's territorial identity and create links between product quality and local environmental distinctiveness (Ilbery *et al.*, 2003). However, an alternative strategy is for producers to emphasise the links between the product and the process used to create it. Products marketed as 'organic' or 'fair trade' achieve this by highlighting *"the environmental, social and distributional processes associated with particular products, and distancing them from the perceived negative consequences of product standardization, mass marketing, environmental degradation, and health and safety concerns"* (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005 p.120).

These strategies are not mutually exclusive, as many food products are distinguished by links with place and process. However, whatever method is used, the key point is that contemporary debates about food and drink inevitably centre around the issue of quality. Producers and retailers are always anxious to promote their products on grounds of quality (Harvey *et al.*, 2004, Jackson *et al.*, 2007). However, this is problematic because the meaning of 'quality' is socially constructed and, therefore, highly contested.

As Harvey *et al.* (2004) note, foods and drinks have many different qualities, such as whether they are healthy, cheap, tasty, fresh, convenient, safe, or traceable. These qualities can conflict with each other – for example, chips and whisky are tasty but unhealthy if consumed in large quantities, while

tinned spaghetti may be cheap and convenient to prepare, yet poor in taste. The crucial question is who has the power to decide which aspects of quality are deemed more significant than others? Harvey *et al.* (2004) argue that small producers selling through AFNs see quality as defined by factors such as traceability, a known place of production, excellent taste and hand-crafted production methods, whereas the conventional food sector privileges factors such as convenience, consistency, accessibility and value for money. Consequently, struggles between actors in the conventional and alternative food sectors can be understood as attempts to establish who has the authority to define quality (Marsden, 2004).

The idea that quality is socially constructed also acts as a reminder that the same product can hold different meanings and values for different groups of people. For example, Gronow (2004) argues that consumers may value a product for alternative reasons to those promoted by its producers. While consumers may buy a local product because of its traceability and place-specific qualities, Ilbery and Kneafsey (2000) found that, in the eyes of the producers, a product was considered good quality, not because it came from a specific place, but because they had invested large amounts of their own knowledge and skills into its production.

Such findings have led researchers to question the precise nature of the link between 'quality' and place. Hinrichs (2003) has argued that, in relation to food and drink, it is dangerous for researchers to adopt a simple 'local = good' and 'global = bad' dichotomy. She emphasises that localising and globalising

processes are intrinsically related and that, just because a product is considered to be 'local', there can be no guarantee that it is automatically tastier, or more socially or environmentally beneficial. Sage (2003) also argues that satisfying social relations are an important part of the attraction of AFNs for producers and consumers alike. He adds that, in the alternative sector, successful local food businesses are reliant on a producer's ability to build and sustain good relationships with other producers and consumers in the network. However, Hinrichs (2003) emphasises that local producers may still treat staff poorly or choose to export their products all over the world, thus increasing food miles.

"Local, then, is much more (or perhaps much less) than it seems. Specific social or environmental relations do not always map predictably and consistently onto the spatial relation" (Hinrichs, 2003 p.36).

More recent work has begun to question the assumption that alternative foods are more socially equitable because, while some local food projects aim to benefit the community as a whole, others can maintain, or perhaps even perpetuate, forms of social inequality (Trauger, 2007, Guthman, 2007, Abrahams, 2007). For example, Goodman and Goodman (2007) argue that local food consumption in the U.S.A tends to be associated with a particular demographic of white, highly educated and middle to higher income consumers, while Trauger's (2007) study of the use of immigrant labour in organic food production in Pennsylvania shows that the price premium which is placed upon organics results in *"a two-class food system, where farmers*

and labourers produce food they cannot afford to purchase" (Trauger, 2007 p.45).

However, even if locality could be considered a straightforward marker of quality and social justice, 'local food' would still be a contested concept (Allen and Hinrichs, 2007). There is no single accepted definition of what constitutes a local food product in the UK, with different groups choosing to adopt different definitions according to their needs (Working Group on Local Food, 2003). For approved farmers' markets, 'local' is generally defined as produce that comes from within 30 miles radius of the market (National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association, 2007). However, Morris and Buller (2003) explain that 'local' can be understood either in terms of a bounded region within which products are produced and sold, or in terms of 'speciality' or 'locality' foods which are intended as value-added products for export to other countries or regions. Their research also shows that the term 'local' is used flexibly by different groups so that 'local' may sometimes mean that a product is from the immediate vicinity while, in other cases, it may simply mean 'from the UK'. Adopting a geographical definition of 'local' is further complicated by the distinction between the origin of the ingredients and the place of manufacture (Defra, 2003, Working Group on Local Food, 2003). For example, can a fruit-cake ever be considered to be a local product in the UK if the dried fruit and sugar used to make it come from overseas?

Such arguments show that it is doubtful whether any definition of 'local food' could ever be based purely on physical proximity because, rightly or wrongly,

'local' is often equated with a host of values relating to social, environmental and 'quality' criteria. In relation to tourism, this point has been made by authors such as Boniface (2003) and Bessière (1998). Research carried out by Enteleca Consultancy (2001) has also shown that many tourists opt for local foods because they associate them with certain values – for example, they are believed to be better for the environment, healthier, and are seen as a way to support the rural economy.

Local foods may also be popular with tourists because of the ways in which they come to symbolise the place and culture of a destination. Tourists have a tendency to look for signs that capture the 'typical' nature of a particular place (Urry, 1990), and Bessière (1998) notes that: *"man feeds on nutrients but also on signs, symbols, dreams and on imagination"*. Elizabeth David's first cookbook 'Mediterranean Food', which was recently republished (David, 1999), also reveals how, even before the era of the celebrity chef, food was used to evoke a strong sense of place. For the reader accustomed to the monotony of a post-war cuisine still governed by rationing, David would have conjured up images of another world entirely when she wrote of *"the brilliance of the market stalls piled high with pimentos, aubergines, tomatoes, olives, melons, figs and limes; the great heaps of shiny fish, silver, vermillion or tiger-striped"* (David, 1999 p.v).

Therefore, like the wines discussed in Section 2.7, local or regional speciality foods can act as an excellent signifier of place because they are distinctive, have physical links to the landscape in which they were grown, and many are

also associated with history, in the form of local traditions, customs and stories (Boniface, 2003, Bessière, 1998).

However, despite the growth of AFNs and the increased popularity of foods perceived to be local or regional, food consumption trends in the UK also show contrasting tendencies. Morgan *et al.* (2006) have noted that, in addition to demands for local, hand-crafted foods, there is also a continual demand for cheap, international foods. The charity IGD, which works with consumers and companies throughout the grocery chain, highlighted this problem in a recent report, where it was argued that:

> *"The industry challenge is to find a balance between supporting British farmers and reducing food miles, and satisfying consumer demand for year-round availability of an increased number of products, at even lower prices"* (IGD, 2002).

However, the extent to which such trends are really in conflict can be questioned because, according to Morgan *et al.* (2006), trends for 'quality' local produce, and trends for cheaper convenience foods tend to be associated with different kinds of consumers. Local foods, for example, are often seen as a middle class phenomenon and, if we accept Bourdieu's (1984) arguments about the importance of distinction among consumers (Section 2.5), the fact that different social groups make different food choices is to be expected.

More recently, arguments have centred upon the relationship between the local and the global, with many theorists arguing that they should not be seen as binary opposites because the 'alternative' and 'conventional' food sectors do not operate in isolation from each other, and are not internally homogenous (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997, Hinrichs, 2003, Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). As Marsden's (2004) distinction between face-to-face, proximate, and extended SFSCs shows, AFNs can take a number of forms, from those that involve selling at the very local level, to those that involve exporting 'local' products for sale throughout the world. Equally, Sage's (2003) interviews with small producers in Ireland revealed considerable disparities in terms of the extent to which interviewees were willing to engage with the 'conventional' sector. While some producers refused to supply supermarkets as a matter of principle, others were eager to take advantage of the increased volume of sales available from the multiples. Supermarkets have also been anxious to try and capture some of the benefits currently enjoyed by the 'alternative' sector, with many of the major retailers having considerable success through products labelled as 'organic' or 'local' (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000, Blay-Palmer and Donald, 2007, Jackson *et al.*, 2007).

For this reason, recent work is critical of the notion that a discrete and coherent 'alternative' food sector exists in opposition to a discrete and coherent 'conventional' food sector (Holloway *et al.*, 2007a, Holloway *et al.*, 2007b, Watts *et al.*, 2005, Morris and Kirwan, 2007, Watts *et al.*, 2007) with Ilbery and Maye (2005) arguing that most producers show a more hybridised approach to production, which is characterised by a tendency to 'dip in and

out' of conventional and alternative modes at different times. Similar arguments have been made by Watts *et al.* (2005) who suggest that a spectrum exists from weaker to stronger versions of 'alternativeness'. At the weaker end of the spectrum are projects that emphasise particular 'quality' aspects of the food products themselves – for example, better taste or freshness – but which do not necessarily say anything about the networks through which such products circulate. By contrast, projects with a stronger understanding of 'alternative' will be more explicit about the avenues via which products are produced and sold – for example, they may emphasise that products have reduced food miles and provide more jobs for local people. In this way, they argue that 'alternative' food should be about the networks through which products are produced and sold, rather than focussing on 'locality' foods – regional specialities which are often produced for export via conventional avenues (Watts *et al.*, 2007). An approach which is based upon emphasising the ways in which particular products are produced, and the networks through which they circulate is also argued to be a better business strategy for small producers. This is because research shows that mainstream retailers, such as Marks and Spencer and Waitrose, are making increasing attempts to appropriate particular discourses – such as freshness, safety and quality – that have been more traditionally associated with the 'alternative' sector (Blay-Palmer and Donald, 2007, Jackson *et al.*, 2007). However, while it is relatively easy for mainstream retailers to appropriate particular qualities inherent in the food products themselves, it is harder for them to emulate the ways in which these products are produced and circulated – for example,

small-scale production techniques and face to face contacts between producer and consumer at farmers' markets.

As Holloway *et al.* have argued (2007a), such critiques are not intended to dispute the potential benefits that 'alternative' food systems can yield, as many researchers support the rationale that exists for improving the sustainability of food systems. However, in view of the problems associated with an alternative/conventional dualism, Holloway *et al.* recommend abandoning such distinctions in favour of an approach based upon a series of analytical fields – such as food production methods, nature of supply chain, producer-consumer interactions *etc.* – through which different food projects can be mapped and analysed. These fields have a number of advantages over the more standard alternative/conventional dualisms found in much of the literature. Firstly, they are able to *"recognise the relational contingency of what is regarded as alternative at any one time and in any one place… Although discourses of alternativeness might be powerful in stimulating challenges to what are felt to be, or experienced as, unjust economic relations, the alternative itself is a slippery concept, resisting definition and shifting as soon as attempts are made to tie it down"* (Holloway *et al.*, 2007b p.5). They also allow for a more sophisticated, in-depth analysis of how different food projects are designed and operated in practice and, as a result, we can *"begin to find out exactly where in the projects the potential is found for countering prevailing power relations"* (Holloway *et al.*, 2007b p.14).

This 'relational' approach to food systems is echoed by Maxey (2007) who suggests that a sustainability framework could provide a solution to the problems inherent in the alternative/conventional discourse. He argues that, instead of talking about 'alternative' or 'conventional' food systems, we should look to analyse the economic, social and environmental sustainability of different production systems. According to Maxey, sustainability should not be viewed as a defined and measurable concept that can be plotted against various indicators. Instead, he explains that it is socially constructed and that this is one of its greatest strengths as an analytical concept because *"sustainability encourages us all to consider what we want to sustain and to assess the ways we wish to go about this"* (Maxey, 2007 p.59). This critical relational approach to sustainability is therefore an attempt to generate an open debate about the priorities and values inherent in food production.

However, in addition to issues of health, sustainability and quality, tourist demands for foods perceived to be 'traditional' and 'local' can also be viewed as linked to a quest for authenticity. Debates about the meaning and validity of authenticity have played a central role in the tourism literature and the following section reviews this discussion by exploring how the concept can relate to this study of food and tourism.

2.10 The quest for the 'authentic'

Taylor (2001) has claimed that *"there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it"* (Taylor, 2001 p.8). However, although there continues to be much debate about the meaning and

function of authenticity within tourism, the concept remains a useful one, with Yeoman *et al.* (2006) writing about the importance of 'authenti-seeking' – a process which describes *"consumers searching for authenticity from a range of products, services and experiences, and looking for it within themselves"* (Yeoman *et al.*, 2006 p.1128). Such products, services and experiences could involve attempts to find authenticity through an exploration of the foods and drinks of a destination. Interestingly, just as explanations for the emergence of alternative food networks have revolved around increasing consumer resistance to the industrialisation of agriculture, so discussions of authenticity have focused upon society's need for meaning in the face of the increasing globalisation and commodification of culture. For example, Taylor (2001) sees the tourist's desire for authenticity as a result of a world where people feel they have become alienated from nature, and where everyday life is viewed as increasingly inauthentic.

> *"Of course, authenticity is valuable only where there is perceived inauthenticity. Such is the 'plastic' world of the consumer. Enamoured by the distance of authenticity, the modern consciousness is instilled with a simultaneous feeling of lack and desire erupting from a sense of loss felt within 'our' world of mass culture and industrialisation and giving rise to possibilities of redemption through contact with the naturally, spiritually and culturally 'unspoilt'"* (Taylor, 2001 p.10).

Further support for such explanations comes from the heritage tourism literature, where theorists such as McIntosh and Prentice (1999) have argued

that, by exploring the past, tourists are gaining an insight into their own sense of identity and culture. Similar arguments are presented by Wang (1999), who has claimed that *"tourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the Other. They also search for the authenticity of, and between, themselves"* (Wang, 1999 p.364). Kate Soper's work on 'alternative hedonism' also reflects consumer concerns with the 'inauthentic' nature of modern life (Soper, 2007). Soper argues that many people are changing their consumption practices, not just to limit what they see as the undesirable side-effects of modern lifestyles, but also because they have become dissatisfied with the supposed 'pleasures' that come from consuming in this way. Consequently, they are choosing different forms of consumption that they consider both more ethically sound and more personally pleasurable. Similar themes have also been explored by Barnett *et al.* (2005, Clarke *et al.*, 2007) who argue that the rise of ethical consumerism associated with the Slow Food and Fair-Trade campaigns challenges the popular view of the consumer as an entirely self-interested and egotistical person. Instead, they argue that such behaviour involves *"new forms of citizenly action… being configured through creative redeployment of the repertoires of consumerism."* (Clarke *et al.*, 2007 p.233).

These ideas could help explain why tourists may be seeking an 'authentic' experience through an exploration of traditional local foods. As discussed in Section 2.9, local foods are generally perceived to be simple, natural products with strong links to culture and the environment, and they may therefore appear more authentic than the mass-produced, industrialised products available through conventional supermarket shopping. Both Taylor (2001) and

Yeoman *et al.* (2006) argue that tourists choose between competing products, destinations and services on the basis of how authentic they perceive them to be. If such understandings are correct, café and restaurant owners may need to rethink their menus in the light of what tourists consider to be 'authentic' products of the area. This point was made by Adam Nicolson (2007), in a *Daily Telegraph* article championing 'real', locally-made souvenirs – including food products. Nicholson argues that:

"Unlike everything else, from which memory and detail fades, it is as if the longer you hold onto these things, the greater the associations and the sharper the recollections that gather about them. They are tangible memories, objects to thwart time because they collect and store memories like filings around a magnet. They are real souvenirs, encapsulations not only of the place but of your time in the place, a little point of fixity and recall" (Nicolson, 2007 p.W1).

However, attempts to analyse the authenticity of food and drink must first tackle the issue of what 'authenticity' really means. Debates over the meaning of authenticity in tourism studies go back to Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1989), who disagreed about the extent to which tourists were seeking – and finding – authenticity. Boorstin (1964) argued that tourists were gullible creatures who were satisfied by 'pseudo-events' and contrived tourist attractions, and who were not interested in finding 'genuine' authenticity on their holidays. By contrast, MacCannell (1989) argued that tourists were desperately seeking the authentic. However, he claimed that their search

would always be doomed to failure because they could not penetrate beyond the 'staged authenticity' of orchestrated tourist events in order to experience the 'real' culture – or 'back region' – of the destination.

Contemporary theorists have criticised MacCannell and Boorstin for the fact that their arguments revolve around an 'objective' understanding of authenticity – as something that can be externally verified by reference to a standard set of criteria (Wang, 1999). Critics argue that objective judgements of authenticity are highly problematic for a number of reasons and that authenticity should therefore be viewed as a socially constructed concept. They explain that all cultures change and, if you go back far enough, there are no examples of 'pure' societies upon which concepts of authenticity can be based (Germann Molz, 2004, Meethan, 2001, Bell and Valentine, 1997). As Wang (1999) has argued:

> *"The problem is that there is no absolute point of origin, nor is anything static, rather, change is constant… The difficulty of this historicist conception of authenticity lies in the fact that the restless and infinite retreat of now will eventually make anything that has taken place authentic"* (Wang, 1999 p.366).

For example, in relation to food, the cup of tea and the potato are commonly regarded as quintessentially English, yet both are immigrant foods. Equally, if you live in the West Midlands, you are likely to find the Balti becoming a regular feature of your diet as Asian immigrants develop an industry inspired

by cookery from their home countries. Thus, as Hughes (1995) has argued, objective understandings of authenticity are challenged by globalisation because *"in a traditional view, authenticity is validated by kinship with its conceiving culture and discernible from its especial characteristics that have been preserved through territorial separation"* (Hughes, 1995 p.783). However, the expansion of television and the Internet, together with the increasing international trade in products and services means that, in the 21st century, mere physical separation is not enough to 'preserve' cultures in isolation.

Even if such preservation were possible, it may not be desirable because, as Bell and Valentine (1997), Meethan (2001) and Wang (1999) have argued, there are power relations involved in the issue of who gets to decide what is considered 'authentic'. For example, Meethan explains how a concern for authenticity and cultural preservation in the developing world could actually prevent the kind of economic growth – such as the development of infrastructure and services – that could benefit the local population. By demanding that such destinations remain 'unspoilt' we are defending a notion of authenticity that *"carries with it the implication that the benefits of modernism should not be extended to the exotic others, in case 'they' lose what 'we' want"* (Meethan, 2001 p.110). He claims that, when using the term authenticity, we need to be very careful about who is using it, what they are using it for, and why.

Hage (1997) also describes how Sydney's cosmopolitan residents voice concerns about preserving 'authentic' ethnic food within Sydney. They criticise the spread of ethnic restaurants that have been modified to make them more accessible to westerners and want to see more ethnic communities cooking for themselves. From an initial reading, such opinions appear to embody a concern for those from other cultures. However, in Hage's (1997) view, the diners are not concerned with whether ethnic groups feel at home in Sydney, or whether they are economically successful. Instead, they want immigrant populations to remain unchanged and insular so that they can then serve as a frontier to be explored by 'daring' Western diners who are keen to enhance their stock of cultural capital by recounting examples of 'truly authentic' dining experiences. Thus, if the immigrants were to show initiative by translating menus into English or by changing some of the ingredients to attract Westerners, as Cohen and Avieli (2004) recommend (p.40), their restaurants will be scorned by those who deride such innovations as inauthentic.

As a result of such critiques, 'objective' understandings of authenticity have been challenged by accounts that see authenticity as a social construction. As Hughes (1995) puts it: *"there has been a wholesale shift from the residual belief in the capacity to simply recover and reinterpret heritage, in an authentic way, to a constructivist view of the world that questions the very possibility of authenticity"* (Hughes, 1995 p.7). Jackson's (1999) work on the commodification of cultural artefacts also suggests that, instead of talking about 'authenticity', we should focus upon 'authentification', which is the

process whereby people make claims for authenticity and the interests that those claims serve.

However, recent developments have extended such discussions further by arguing for a third kind of authenticity that is broader in scope. According to Wang (1999), objective and constructivist accounts of authenticity are limited by the fact that both relate to the nature of the destinations or attractions being visited by the tourists. Objective understandings of authenticity thus depend upon whether the attraction being visited can be 'proved' authentic with reference to some external criteria, while constructivist understandings focus on the ways in which particular attractions are 'staged' by tourism operators (MacCannell, 1989).

By contrast, Wang argues that we need to develop an 'existential' understanding of authenticity that relates – not to the objects or attractions being visited – but to the nature of the tourist activity itself. Existential authenticity thus describes that way in which a tourist, by participating in holiday activities, can experience an authentic sense of self that is free from the restrictions of everyday living. As Wang explains: *"people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily"* (Wang 1999 p.351).

These ideas are particularly relevant to studies of food and tourism because, according to Wang (1999), existential authenticity often results from the ways in which holidays allow us to deepen relationships with our loved ones and to experience physical pleasures that are absent from daily life. Thus activities such as wine tasting, visiting a farmers' market, or sharing a nice meal with friends or family could all result in feelings of existential authenticity that make the holiday experience seem more 'real' and special. Similar arguments have been made by McIntosh and Prentice (1999), who explain that it is important to understand the ways in which tourists add personal meaning and emotional engagement to their heritage tourism experiences, while Taylor (2001) also talks about the importance of 'sincerity' in the visitor experience. According to Taylor, sincerity is about visitors becoming more absorbed in a cultural experience by sharing experiences with their hosts. Thus *"rather than seeing value as the emanation of an authentic object, the moment of interaction may become the site in which value is perceived"* (Taylor 2001 p.24). It could therefore be argued that food tourism, as an inherently sensual and participatory activity, offers an ideal opportunity for tourists to experience this kind of 'existential' authenticity.

However, Wang (1999) and Cohen (2002) also argue that, if we are to understand the motivations for tourist behaviour we must focus, not on academic debates about authenticity, but on the ways in which the concept is understood and used by the tourists themselves. Despite strong academic critiques, the notion of 'objective' authenticity still plays a powerful role in the media and in the lives of everyday people, and when changes initiated by food

and tourism appear to threaten what are mistakenly viewed as 'natural', 'pure' traditions, responses can be sharp. For example, the arrival of a McDonalds can be greeted with anger from local communities who fear an encroachment from corporate America and all it represents. Much media coverage was generated when anti-globalisation campaigner José Bové and his supporters destroyed a McDonalds restaurant in the French town of Millau in 1999. The group tried to defend themselves against a jail sentence by arguing that their actions were carried out in protest over US trade restrictions on their local cheese, Roquefort (BBC News, 2001). Thus, as Bell and Valentine (1997) have noted, although cuisines are constantly evolving in reality, strong feelings may still arise when they are threatened because threats to food may also be viewed as threats to cultural identity:

> *"National cuisines are in a process of constant reinvention, absorbing new influences and letting some traditions die out. Nevertheless, a nation's diet can have a key role to play in nationalistic sentiments, with threatened invasions of 'filthy foreign food' being seen as dangerous to the whole fabric of national identity. At the same time, national cuisines other than our own are often celebrated, even fetishised, for their exotic difference, adding spice to life. The histories of individual foodstuffs, like the histories of migrant groups, thus tell tales of both xenophobia and neophilia, of dread and desire"* (Bell and Valentine, 1997 p.165).

Thus, according to Cohen (2002), contemporary tourists continue to seek both objective and existential authenticity in their holidays because, while some

tourists are spending more, travelling further, and experiencing more discomfort and danger in order to experience encounters with 'untouched' environments and cultures, others are happy to simply relax, have a good time and be themselves. A further explication of Cohen's arguments can be found in his research into the Naga fireballs on the Mekong River in Thailand (Cohen, 2007). The fireballs, which are said to be produced by a mythical serpent, became a major tourist attraction and this resulted in widespread public debate over their origins (Were they supernatural? Manmade? Or a natural phenomenon?). The answer to this dilemma proved to be what Cohen described as a 'postmodern' account where all three interpretations of the fireballs could co-exist, leading to new insights into how authenticity can be theorised. According to Cohen: *"The concept of "staged authenticity" proves inadequate to deal with alleged supernatural phenomena, which are ingrained in a local tradition, and attract potential believers. Such phenomena could be "staged" from one perspective, but nevertheless "authentic" from another"* (Cohen, 2007 p.180). Therefore, in Cohen's account, the focus of authenticity is not on the fireballs themselves, but on the multiple meanings that the tourists bring to the event.

In relation to holiday food and drink, we may sometimes be willing to try dishes that appear strange or unpalatable simply because we perceive them to be authentic and are wanting a 'genuine' experience of a traditional culture. However, on other occasions, the shared experience of cooking sausages over a campfire with friends after a beautiful day in the sun may seem just as authentic because we feel we are experiencing ourselves more fully.

Following from Cohen (2007), we can also see that different kinds of authenticity can be experienced simultaneously in one meal.

2.11 Conclusion

This analysis of the literature has shown that the intellectual histories of food and tourism are not only parallel; they are also interlinked. As a result, studies of food and tourism have much to contribute to the discussion of how we understand ourselves, as well as the people and places that surround us. This discussion also shows that, although choices surrounding food/drink and tourism are intensely personal matters, this is not the full story because both activities also have a strong social dimension. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of food and tourism for us, we need to investigate their meanings for the individual in tandem with how these meanings are formulated within wider society. Doing so also involves a consideration of the interaction of structure and agency. Agency, of course, plays a vital role in people's food and tourism decisions as our own beliefs and preferences will influence the choices that we make. However, the ideas presented in this chapter show that structural factors – from the social rules governing how we behave on holiday or in a restaurant, to the workings of the class system and the economic factors affecting food producers – can also have a major impact on the links between food and tourism. Structures can be enabling or constraining (Giddens, 1986, Sayer, 1992, Doyal and Harris, 1986). However, it is an appreciation of the ways in which these structures interact with agency that is so crucial to this research, as the results presented in Chapters 4-7 will demonstrate.

More crucially, the material presented in this chapter makes it possible to identify a number of key themes which relate to the study's four research questions. These themes form the basis of the analytic structure that I used to make sense of my data, as outlined in Chapter 3.11. They are as follows:

- Involvement. This was based upon the work of Warde and Martens (2000, Doyal and Harris, 1986), De Botton (2002) and Long (2004a) with a view to discovering how and why tourists interacted with holiday foods and drinks in the ways that they did. It was also instrumental in answering the first research question which asks 'what role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?'

- The different/familiar. This was chosen because of its relevance to Cohen (1972), Plog (1974), Urry (1990) and Warde (1997). It was crucial to the second research question which asks 'how do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home?' It was designed to establish how we identify and cope with novel experiences on holiday.

- Place and authenticity. This theme relates to the third research question which asks 'What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?' This theme emerges from the literatures on wine tourism and alternative food networks, as discussed by scholars such as Boniface (2003) and Marsden (2004), as well as from debates surrounding the role of authenticity within tourism.

- Constraints. This theme was chosen to explore the final research question which asks 'what impacts do structural constraints have on the

holiday food sector?' In contrast to the preceding three, this theme was chosen largely because it has been under-represented in the literature. Although the issue of constraints has been touched upon by theorists such as Cohen and Avieli (2004) and Warde (1997), comments made by interviewees during data collection made me realise that the issue was more significant than the literature suggests. For example, as described in Chapter 7.2.3, local food producers can be constrained by the fact that many cafés and restaurants will prefer to buy cheaper ingredients from elsewhere. Equally, tourist food choices can be constrained by the kinds of food on offer from restaurants at their destination or by factors relating to income or family status.

The selection of these themes also had implications for the methodology chosen for the study. The following chapter describes how this thesis's focus on people's meanings, values and beliefs necessitated a qualitative approach to data generation and analysis which was based around interviews throughout the food chain, from the tourists consuming the food products, at one end, to the producers creating and marketing them, at the other.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Developing a coherent methodology is dependent upon satisfying three key factors. Firstly, the techniques chosen must be consistent with the researcher's intellectual approach. Secondly, the researcher must choose methods that can best answer his or her research questions. Finally, any strategy must also take account of practical considerations such as safety, time and cost. This chapter outlines the research strategy that I produced in answer to these questions. It begins by justifying the choice of a largely qualitative approach focused upon interviews throughout the food chain, before going on to summarise the techniques employed. It then explains why two study locations of Exmoor and the Lake District were chosen, and gives details of my overall sampling strategy before providing a description of each technique. Finally, I offer an insight into how I dealt with some of the practical issues encountered in the research before describing the development of the analytical framework through which I interpreted the data.

3.2 A qualitative approach and the importance of food chains

To recap, my research aim was to identify and develop concepts which will help us better understand people's holiday food and drink choices. This aim had two components: to investigate how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of place, and to investigate how our holiday food

and drink choices relate to our understanding of ourselves and others. I also developed four detailed research questions to address these issues:

- What role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?

- How do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home?

- What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?

- What impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food sector?

These research questions demonstrate that I am concerned with developing an in-depth understanding of why food, drink and tourism interact with place and identity in the ways that they do and, as a result, I had to investigate the meanings, values and beliefs that people held about the world. Consequently, qualitative methods based upon semi-structured, conversational interviews formed a core part of my research strategy. As Mason (2002) argues:

"Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. We can do all this qualitatively by using methodologies that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or inconvenienced by them" (Mason, 2002 p.1).

To answer my research questions, I needed to gain an understanding of why tourists make the food choices that they do and, consequently, talking to a variety of tourists was essential. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, this research was also informed by an interest in food chains and a desire to explore the interactions that were occurring throughout them, from those producing and processing local food products, at one end, to those involved in their marketing and consumption, at the other. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, it was obvious that, unless tourists were going to bring provisions from home, they could only select from the range of items available at their destination. Equally, those producing and supplying food products could only sell what their customers were willing to buy. Therefore, I needed to supplement the tourist interviews by talking to café, pub and restaurant proprietors and local food producers so that I could understand the situation from their perspectives as suppliers to tourists and thus take account of the reciprocal relationship between producers and consumers. Furthermore, by interviewing those responsible for producing and marketing local food products, I was able to explore how the contested meanings and values attached to such products were developed and promoted to consumers. Doing this also required me to develop an awareness of some of the key structural constraints influencing the local food sector (see Chapter 7). As a result, both these groups – the demand (consumers) and supply (providers) sides – formed the basis of my interviewing strategy as Sections 3.5-3.8 describe.

Also included in the supply-side interviews were a diverse range of food and tourism experts – from regional tourist board employees to Defra officials and

local food journalists. Talking to these people provided important background information that was useful when interpreting the earlier interviews. It also enabled me to put my research into the context of the wider issues affecting the sectors – such as government food policy and regional tourism initiatives.

The choice of a qualitative methodology based upon semi-structured interviews was also a result of the need to take an interpretive approach to the research which aimed to delve beneath the surface of what was said to discover the deeper meanings held by interviewees (Fay, 1975). In doing this, I was able to explore a rich variety of contextual factors that were relevant to the research.

However, as discussed in Chapter 2, understanding the interactions between food and tourism requires a consideration of structure as well as agency. This was therefore another factor behind my decision to interview a variety of actors, from the tourist consumers of food products to local food producers, café and restaurant owners and food and tourism policy makers. By interviewing throughout the food chain, I was able to analyse the food and tourism sectors from a number of alternative perspectives and gain a better insight into the ways in which human agency was interacting with structural factors.

More extensive techniques can also complement in-depth studies because, by gathering information on a broader scale, we can attempt to establish whether the research findings are applicable beyond the immediate context of the

study. For this reason, I supplemented the interviews with some quantitative techniques, as described in Section 3.9. This comprised an analysis of menus collected from my study regions which enabled me to examine how food was being marketed in the Lake District and Exmoor.

In summary, therefore, my approach consisted of the following techniques:

- *Twenty-nine[1] in-depth interviews with people from a range of income and education levels who had had a variety of holiday experiences, both in the UK and abroad* (p.103). The interviews focused on issues such as how the foods, drinks and eating practices encountered on the holiday differed from those of previous holidays, wherever they were taken, and with the home setting; what food and drink experiences proved most memorable; which foods/drinks – if any – they associated with being 'typical' of their destination; and what they felt about the social circumstances in which their holiday eating and drinking took place.

- *Seventy-eight interviews with current tourists* (p.106). These employed similar themes to the in-depth interviews, but were more focused on discovering how food and drink interacted with place in the specific holiday settings of the study areas.

- *Twenty-four in-depth interviews with café, pub and restaurant owners/managers* (p.111). The interviews covered topics such as how these businesses promoted themselves to tourists, as well as how they designed their menus and sourced their ingredients. Interviewees were

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[1] I aimed to recruit 30 respondents to reflect the particular social profile described on p.104. However, the difficulty of contacting participants in the manual workers category meant that I was able to interview only 29.

selected to cover a full spectrum of the various types of eating places that were found in both study regions.

- *Seventeen in-depth interviews with local food and drinks producers* (p.115). These producers were selected to cover the range of different types of produce available in the study regions. Interviewees were asked to give details of their wholesaling and direct sale activities and were asked to explain how they produced and marketed their products in order to explore the economic realities facing producers. They were also questioned about the role that tourism played in their businesses.

- *Sixteen in-depth interviews with local food and tourism experts and promoters* (p.119). These were the broadest kind of interviews, covering everyone from food journalists and tourism planners to Defra officials. They were designed to place the study in context by giving an insight into factors such as the policy culture and imagery surrounding local food.

- *Analysis of 80 menus* (p.122). The menus, which were collected from all the eating establishments within selected towns/villages in the study areas, were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis to investigate the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks. The analysis showed the types of dishes available in both regions and the extent to which authenticity and local sourcing/provenance were promoted through how the dishes were described.

Table 1 shows how these techniques were combined to tackle specific elements of my research questions. As the table shows, there was a degree of overlap between the methods employed, and this triangulation was helpful in cases where I wanted to verify conclusions, gather more detail or compare the responses of different groups of interviewees. However, some methods also had a more specific focus on one or more of the research questions, thus enabling certain themes to be targeted more effectively.

Table 1. How the six methods related to the four research questions

Themes and research questions	In-depth and current tourist interviews	Café, pub and restaurant interviews	Food producer interviews	Expert interviews	Analysis of menus
1. What role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?					
	✓	✓			
2. How do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home?					
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?					
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. What impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food sector?					
	✓	✓	✓	✓	

In addition to deciding which techniques to employ, I also had to decide where to conduct my research. The following section explains the rationale for basing this study on a dual-site approach that compared the Lake District and Exmoor.

3.3 Spatial comparison: the choice of the Lake District and Exmoor

For reasons of time and cost-efficiency, many studies are focused upon a single location. However, this can result in the wider relevance of the findings being questioned (Mason, 2002). This study was an attempt to discover whether there is an intrinsic link between how people make sense of food and drink on holiday, and how they make sense of themselves and others. Therefore, it was important to determine whether, and to what extent, my findings could apply beyond a single study area. However, by comparing results from more than one location, it was also possible to identify opposing instances where location-specific factors resulted in differences between the areas chosen. I therefore decided to employ a dual-site strategy for this research that was focused upon the Lake District and Exmoor. Figure 1 shows the position of these study areas within the UK, while Figures 2 and 3 provide a more detailed picture of both regions and show the position of some of the major towns used for the study.

Figure 1. The location of Exmoor and the Lake District study areas in Great Britain

Figure 2. Exmoor

Figure 3. The Lake District

The decision to use two British locations for a study of food and tourism may seem surprising given that the UK does not have the kind of culinary reputation associated with countries like France or Italy. However, there were a number of reasons why Exmoor and the Lake District proved to be good locations for this study. Firstly, by focusing on the UK, I was able to explore a new area for research by analysing how the recent expansion of alternative food networks in Britain, as described in Chapter 2.9, could link to developments in the domestic tourism sector. This was important because, as discussed in Chapter 2, most existing studies of food tourism have chosen to concentrate, firstly, on international tourism and, secondly, on visits to countries where there is a strong reputation for culinary excellence. As a result, a study of such countries would have contributed little to our existing knowledge of food tourism. It was also apparent that the UK's burgeoning local food sector – which is, in itself, a relatively new subject for research – had not been investigated in relation to the development of domestic tourism, and that this was an important omission from the academic literature. In addition, a UK study also offered advantages relating to practical issues of time, cost and language barriers.

In order to be suitable for this research, potential UK study areas had to have two characteristics: a large and thriving tourism sector and a local food sector with a range of well-known, easily available food products that were associated with the area. The need to incorporate both factors restricted the choice of study areas because Hereford or Shropshire, for example, have a thriving local food industry but insufficient numbers of tourists, while the New

Forest has plenty of tourists but few iconic food products associated with it. By contrast, Exmoor and the Lake District satisfied both criteria for a number of reasons.

Firstly, both are national parks which provided many opportunities to talk to the large number of tourists holidaying there. Tourism in both locations tends to be centred on the beauty of the upland landscape and outdoor activities, such as walking and cycling, play a major role, although history and literary associations also attract visitors. In economic terms, they are farmed upland areas where incomes are under pressure, although the strength of the tourist industry means that both regions tend to have low rates of unemployment. On Exmoor, unemployment was just 2.4 per cent in 2002, compared to a UK average of 4.7 per cent (Exmoor National Park Authority, 2002), while the equivalent figure for the Lake District was 1.9 per cent in 2005 (Cumbria County Council, 2005). However, due to the high proportion of service jobs in these areas, wages also tend to be low and many jobs are seasonal, particularly on Exmoor. Here, the tourist season tends to be shorter than it is in the Lake District and the average weekly earning for a full-time male is just £304 – less than 80 per cent of the UK average (Exmoor National Park Authority, 2002), while the equivalent figure for the Lake District is higher at £422.15 (Centre for Regional Economic Development, 2002).

In addition to this, both areas have a thriving local food and drink industry that is based around a number of iconic food products. The Lake District is home to the county's regional food group, Made in Cumbria, and has re-branded

itself as 'The Taste District', with specialities ranging from Cumberland sausage to Kendal Mint Cake, real ale and Grasmere Gingerbread. By contrast, Exmoor is covered by Taste of the West and Exmoor and Quantocks Food Links. It is also part of a region made famous by cider, Cheddar cheese, honey and trout from local streams. Taken together, these factors made Exmoor and the Lake District two good locations in which to study the interaction of food, drink and tourism.

It could, of course, be argued that Exmoor and the Lake District are too similar – both in terms of their geographical nature and also in terms of the socio-economic profile of their visitors – and that better results would be achieved by comparing two very different areas – for example, by comparing the Lake District with Birmingham for an insight into the differences between urban and rural food tourism. There would be advantages to such an approach in that recent attempts to market Britain's cities to visitors, such as the 'Birmingham Bites' campaign, often tend to focus on the sophisticated and cosmopolitan culinary options available within them (Visit Britain, 2006, Visit Britain, 2006a). This, in itself, is an interesting phenomenon and an investigation of urban food cultures in the UK would make for a stimulating and worthwhile research project (see Chapter 8). However, such research would focus on a very different kind of food tourism to that found within rural areas of the UK and, as highlighted in Chapter 1, a specific objective of this study was to investigate the synergy between tourism and developments in the UK's alternative food sector and the best examples of this are to be found in rural areas where the tourism offering is focused upon the attraction of 'local' food products. Also, I

would argue that, although the kinds of tourism found in the Lake District and Exmoor are different to the kinds of tourism found in urban areas, there is still a reasonable variety in terms of the visitors who holiday in these locations. As described later in the chapter, I designed a sampling strategy in order to capture the opinions of tourists from a broad spectrum of social and economic backgrounds. The visitors I encountered also encompassed a wide range of ages and family circumstances and, often, they had very different motivations for visiting the regions – from a desire to take part in outdoor activities, to couples wanting a romantic weekend break and those looking to visit fun family attractions available at the destination.

Finally, as stated previously, by comparing two locations that were reasonably similar, I was able to investigate some of the ways in which my conclusions might have wider relevance beyond the immediate contexts of my study areas. For example, I knew that, if similar themes and opinions were aired by respondents in both study areas, I could have more confidence that my results may reflect wider concerns relating to food and tourism in other rural regions of the UK, rather than just insights from the specific context of just one location.

This is not to say that that there are no differences between the Lake District and Exmoor. I would argue that there are some differences between the two locations, although these tend to be differences of scale rather than character. The Lake District, for example, has a much larger resident population, which is over 40,000 (Lake District National Park Authority, 2006). It also has a bigger

tourist industry. Cumbria received 15.17 million visitors in 2006 and these visitors were responsible for bringing more than £1073 million into the region and supporting 21,322 full-time equivalent jobs (Cumbria Tourism, 2006). By contrast, only 10,500 people live on Exmoor and, in 2000, it was estimated that 1.2 million visitor nights were spent in the park, with these visitors spending just under £40 million (Exmoor National Park Authority, 2001).

These differences of scale were important because, in addition to exploring the similarities between the two locations, I was also able to investigate the kinds of location-specific, contextual factors which might have an influence on variations in the development of the local food sector. For example, I was able to ask whether the Lake District's greater size and tourist status had had an influence on the development of its local food industry.

Despite this, it was sometimes necessary to go slightly beyond the national park boundaries to get the range of interviewees required. For example, where the 29 in-depth interviews with tourists were concerned, I wanted to talk to people about all their recent holidays – wherever they were taken. As a result, it did not matter that these interviews took place outside the National Parks. I also wanted to interview respondents across a wide range of income and education levels (see Section 3.5) and, because people can be reluctant to disclose their salaries or education level to a stranger, I chose to use occupation as a surrogate for these factors. Clearly any large employer – such as the NHS or a local authority – supports a wide range of salaries. However, I decided to recruit participants from Bath and Lancaster Universities for a

number of reasons. Firstly, universities support a range of jobs, from professors to cleaners and maintenance workers. As described in more detail on p.105, these occupations are linked to education levels and a structured pay scale with salaries ranging from just under £12,000 to over £50,000 (Lancaster University, 2007), thus enabling me to access people with a wide range of incomes and educational qualifications. Secondly, universities had the added advantage of being research-friendly institutions where the majority of staff could be contacted by email. When my fieldwork began in 2005, neither Exmoor nor the Lake District were home to any major universities, hence my decision to go slightly beyond these regions and conduct the interviews at Bath and Lancaster Universities. This decision did not impact on the results because, during interviews, participants were asked to talk about their experiences of tourism throughout the world, not in the areas they lived in.

Equally, when interviewing café and restaurant owners and food producers, it was sometimes necessary to go beyond the national park boundaries in order to access a wider range of interviewees. For example, on Exmoor, the best example of a gastro-pub happened to be located just south of the national park boundary, and a similar situation occurred in the Lake District with one of the best-renowned local meat producers. However, I stayed as close to the parks as possible so that, in the Lake District, I did not venture outside Cumbria and, on Exmoor, I went no further than the outskirts of Taunton, which is just a short distance from the park boundary. This decision had no bearing on the results because National Park boundaries were drawn primarily

for administrative convenience and, consequently, many food and tourism businesses in the vicinity still marketed themselves as belonging to the Lake District or Exmoor, even if they were located just outside the boundary.

Having decided who to talk to and where they lived, a further factor to consider was the question of what kind of interviews to conduct. Interviews can range from a highly structured format that uses precise and ordered questions, to a more conversational style where interviewees are given the freedom to talk at length about the subjects that are of interest to them. Therefore, it was important to choose a format that suited my research questions, as the following section describes.

3.4 The 'right' type of interview

The main rationale for using interviews in this study was that my research questions were concerned with tourists' values and beliefs. I therefore had to give people the chance to explain the thoughts behind their actions. For example, someone eating a piece of Grasmere Gingerbread could be doing so for a variety of reasons – perhaps they are on holiday; perhaps this is a treat that they enjoy every Wednesday; or perhaps they are using gingerbread as comfort food after a bad day. This inability to determine motive unambiguously from action was the principal reason why I rejected observation in favour of qualitative interviews. However, I also rejected the use of a highly structured, question-and-answer-style interviewing format in favour of a semi-structured approach which, although based around a number of key themes, gave participants more choice over what topics were

discussed[2] (Ford and Merriman, 1990). Such an approach was designed to develop a deeper understanding of what experiences meant to the individual by allowing respondents to describe the things that were important to them in their own words, rather than forcing them to adhere to a strict questioning agenda. This study was based upon the presumption that holidays, food and drink are highly personal things – what seems like a wonderful vacation experience to one person will be anathema to another – and therefore I was keen to obtain a detailed understanding of the stories of individuals. What was it about that particular Italian wine that was so wonderful? Why was it such a trial to eat at that hotel with the rest of the tour party? And what makes a jar of local honey such a good reminder of Exmoor? In order to discover these things, I had to give my interviewees space to explain the rich variety of contextual factors that were important to the decision-making process (Giddens, 1993, De Botton, 2002). Interviews have been criticised for focusing on the highly subjective accounts – and highly selective memories – of individuals (Mason, 2002). However, because people's memories of holiday food relate to their own personal sense of place and identity as described in Chapter 2 (Long, 2004a, Boniface, 2003, Bessière, 1998), this selectivity and subjectivity was important for my research.

In-depth interviews were good at exploring the intense and personal ways in which people related to food and holidays. However, they also presented problems for the study because of the time taken to conduct them. This did not just affect me as a researcher – it was also a big consideration for the

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[2] See Appendix 2 for examples of interview schedules.

participants. When your interviewees are tourists who have come on holiday to relax, it is clearly unrealistic – and unfair – to expect them to give up 40-60 minutes of their valuable holiday to discuss their feelings about food and drink. For this reason, I developed two types of interviewing strategy in order to avoid this problem, as the following section describes.

3.5 Discussions with tourists – a dual interviewing strategy

The first strategy was to restrict the in-depth interviews to staff at the universities of Bath and Lancaster who, although not on holiday at the time of the interview, had taken holidays to a variety of destinations recently. I then supplemented these staff interviews with shorter interviews with tourists who were actually on holiday in the Lake District and Exmoor. These interviews retained a conversational format and covered similar themes to the in-depth interviews, but were more closely tailored to the ways in which food and drink interacted with place in that particular study area.

The rationale behind this dual approach was that the staff interviewees had the time needed to participate in a longer interview session and to reflect on a variety of holiday experiences that were fresh in their minds. They could also be selected by holiday type and occupation (*e.g.* cleaner, secretary, lecturer, *etc.*) to ensure that I gained access to information about as a wide a range of holiday food experiences as possible. By contrast, the current tourist interviews – although shorter in duration – supported the themes developed in the in-depth interviews and provided valuable additional information about the

ways in which food and tourism were interacting in the specific context of the study areas.

In order to develop meaningful answers to my research questions, I also had to decide which tourists and university staff to interview. This study argues that food and tourism are highly context sensitive and there are therefore, at the most detailed level, as many types of tourist experience as there are tourists. However, because it was impossible to interview everyone, I had to develop a meaningful sampling strategy.

Tourists can be classified and sampled by a number of characteristics, such as age, income, family status, destination, type of holiday, type of accommodation *etc.*, all of which can affect their perceptions of food and tourism to a greater or lesser degree (Mason, 2002). As described in Chapter 2, both eating and travelling involve questions of taste and distinction as well as financial considerations. Indeed, according to Bourdieu: (1984) *"the distribution of the different classes (and class fractions)… runs from those who are best provided with both economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in both respects"* (Bourdieu, 1984 p.114). I therefore had to select interviewees in a way that accounted for their varied financial and cultural resources, and I incorporated this into my sampling strategy in two ways.

For the in-depth staff interviews, I used occupation as the basis for my sampling strategy so that, at each university, I aimed to interview five

professors/lecturers, five administrative/secretarial staff and five manual workers such as cleaners, porters and maintenance staff. These groups correspond to very different income levels, with lectureship and professorial salaries ranging from £27,465 to over £50,000, administrative grades earning between £13,339 and £21,682, and manual workers earning from £11,691 to £13,659 (Lancaster University, 2007). They are also associated with very different levels of formal education and qualifications. Within these groups, I selected staff at random using the online email lists of departments that were not likely to influence their employees' views on food or tourism, such as biological sciences, education and management. I then contacted potential respondents by email to explain my study and ask if they would be willing to participate, while also aiming for a balance of men and women. As a secondary selection strategy, I asked volunteers to list the dates and destinations of their last three holidays so that I was able to select respondents with as wide a range of holiday experiences as possible. This ranged from those who enjoyed seeking out new and different foods to those who self-catered using food brought from home; and from those who had visited far-flung places to those who had stayed within the UK or who liked to visit well-developed Mediterranean resorts. Thirty-seven respondents were contacted and this resulted in a total of 29 participants, with eight of those contacted being unable to help me. However, non-response bias was not problematic here because no one refused to take part (the eight non-participants were willing to be interviewed but were unable to participate for

practical reasons[3]). Profiles of all 29 interviewees can be found in Appendix 1, while interview schedules are given in Appendix 2.

There was a danger that, by asking for volunteers, I would attract only those with a penchant for 'exotic' foods and holidays and, as a result, I was careful to emphasise that I was happy to hear from anyone – including those who took holidays in the UK or for whom food was not an important part of the trip. This strategy proved successful as I received several emails from potential respondents who felt that they would not be sufficiently 'interesting' for my study because they tended to self-cater or opt for UK destinations. However, I reassured those concerned that their contributions would be valuable and, in every case, I was able to convince them to take part.

Before commencing the interviews at Lancaster and Bath, I also piloted the interview schedules with staff at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in Preston. These interviews proved that the main logic of my questioning was working well and enabled me to become more practiced at using my interview schedule and recording equipment before work began on the main interviewing programme.

The second part of my strategy involved shorter, qualitative interviews with tourists holidaying in my study regions. These interviews differed from the pre-arranged, one-to-one staff interviews in that the majority of tourists encountered were with friends or family at the time. As a result, I encouraged

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[3] Four were physically unavailable at the time of the interviews due to being on holiday or sabbatical, two were too busy with work and two were unable to help due to not having taken a holiday for several years.

all group members to participate in the discussion wherever possible. This proved effective because, not only did people appear more relaxed when discussing their holiday food as a group, they were also able to use each other's ideas to stimulate their own feelings on the subject, thus giving me access to a wider range of opinions than if I had interviewed only individuals. This method also showed how groups, rather than individuals, made their eating decisions – whether one person dominated the decision-making process, for example, or whether a consensus emerged.

As these interviews were not pre-arranged, I was unable to select participating tourists in advance, as I did with the in-depth interviews. Even if it had been possible to do so, selecting individuals by occupation would have been unsuitable for these interviews because, amongst the general public, salaries and qualification levels cannot be deduced from a person's occupation as accurately as they can in a university context where job types are linked to a fixed pay scale and particular levels of qualification. This time, therefore, I asked interviewees to tell me what type of accommodation they were using so that I was able to conduct interviews with the following groups:

- Visitors choosing relatively cheap or low-social-status forms of accommodation; *e.g.* youth hostels or holiday camps, such as Butlins at Minehead.
- Visitors choosing forms of accommodation associated with average prices and levels of social status; e.*g.* those staying in standard hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation. I also included those who were camping or caravanning in this group on the grounds that the majority

of people choosing such accommodation were families who described staying on well-equipped sites that offered relatively good levels of comfort and privacy.

- Visitors choosing expensive, high-social-status forms of accommodation. These interviews were targeted at those staying in what I described as 'smart hotels' – *i.e.* three-star establishments offering a wide range of facilities and a high level of comfort.

- For the Lake District only, I added a fourth category of 'luxury hotels', which I defined as those that were listed as four-star and above. However, I was unable to replicate this category on Exmoor because, as described in Section 3.3, Exmoor's less-developed tourist industry did not support any four-star establishments. There was thus an extra level of luxury available to tourists visiting the Lake District.

Like occupation, accommodation type is not a perfect way of accounting for a person's financial or cultural resources because tourists may choose to stay somewhere that is above or below their 'normal' choice of provider. The wealthy, for example, may decide to go camping while lower income groups may choose to 'splash out' on an expensive hotel. It is also likely that there will be a variation in standards and prices within the categories listed above. However, this approach remained effective in assessing some of the main differences in tourists' financial and cultural resources. It was also practical to operationalise within the field because, when interviewing, I was able to ask tourists what kind of accommodation they were using. Furthermore, I was able to access different groups by conducting my interviews in a variety of locations

– for example, by getting permission to interview in the residents' lounge or bar area of youth hostels and luxury hotels.

Choosing where and when to interview required considerable thought – not only because I wanted to access tourists across a wide range of financial and cultural resources, but also because I wanted people to be in an environment where they felt sufficiently relaxed to give thoughtful answers to my questions. It was clear that accosting people on a busy shopping street or in a noisy car park was not going to be conducive to the kind of discussion I wanted to have and, as a result, I developed a strategy that was based around locations where people were relaxed and happy to talk. In practice, this meant conducting daytime interviews with tourists who were sitting and relaxing on park benches, sea walls and village greens. Bus stops were also useful as tourists were often glad of the diversion while they waited. However, when targeting those staying in youth hostels or luxury hotels, I found that early evenings were the best time to catch people and, having got permission from the proprietor, I would speak to tourists who were relaxing in the bar or lounge before dinner.

Before commencing the interviewing process, I spent several days in each study region which enabled me to select the most fruitful locations for the interviews. During this time, I was also able to conduct pilot interviews with visitors available on those days. The pilot interviews revealed that, although my question topics were working well, I needed to think carefully about the

audibility of the recorded interviews – particularly those conducted outside

My initial aim was to conduct 10 interviews within each category for each study region. In practice, I exceeded this number because it was sometimes difficult to predict which group the tourists would belong to before I began talking to them. This resulted in a total of 78 group interviews being conducted. However, by doing more interviews it became clear that I had arrived at the point of 'theoretical saturation'. *"This point is reached when your data begin to stop telling you anything new about the social process under scrutiny"* (Mason, 2002 p.134). Therefore, later interviews revealed less new information and tended to repeat sentiments expressed by previous interviewees.

As I have described, this dual interviewing strategy was helpful in two ways. Firstly, from a practical perspective, the in-depth interviews with university staff helped me to overcome the constraints imposed by the brevity of the interviews with the tourists in the study regions. Secondly, by interviewing university staff about their experiences of holiday food across a broad range of both domestic and international destinations, I was able to develop a more generalised understanding of how people understood and related to food on holiday, and this provided an important grounding for my more specific investigation of how local food and place were related in the contexts of my study areas. However, no selection strategy can be perfect and it is also important to acknowledge the weaknesses of this dual approach. Firstly, in

relation to the interviews with university staff, it could be argued that the 29 people interviewed comprised a small and somewhat specific sample. In particular, the fact that those interviewed were working in a university could imply that they might be inclined to have rather different values and ideals to those encountered in alternative contexts, such as private sector employees working in sales or the financial sector, for example. This applies particularly to the academic staff, who might be viewed as examples of the 'intellectuals' described by Bourdieu (1984), and who may have given different answers on account of this. However, there were also limitations inherent in the interviews with the Lake District and Exmoor visitors. The main problem with these interviews was that they were, of necessity, short interviews of 15 minutes or less. As a result, although I would always ask people to reflect on how their current holiday compared to other holiday food experiences that they had had in the past, the amount of contextual information yielded by these interviews remained limited and it was sometimes hard to judge how a person's attitudes to food made sense, both in terms of their overall holiday histories and also in terms of their more general personal experiences and lifestyles. This meant that I had to be careful not to draw too many inferences from the limited contextual information available when interpreting the data.

3.6 Café, pub and restaurant owners

Like the tourists, the café, pub and restaurant owners were asked to describe what they saw as the key characteristics of their region's food and drink and to explain what they considered to be local food, all of which enabled me to gain a more detailed insight into the possible links between food and place.

However, in order to develop an understanding of the structures relevant to food and tourism, I also asked about where ingredients were sourced from, and why. Such discussions raised issues of the differing profit margins between local and non-local ingredients, the differences in supply chains and preparation methods and the various ways in which such businesses chose to market themselves. Sample interview schedules are available in Appendix 2.

As with the tourists, I wanted to ensure that a full range of business types were included in the interviews in both study areas. In order to do this, I sought to distinguish between eating places on grounds of style (café, restaurant and pub), price and apparent policy on local sourcing. This led to three main types of eating establishment with the following sub-types:

Restaurants

1. Traditional English country house restaurant offering luxury fine dining.

2. Mid to upper price range restaurant that was innovative (as opposed to traditional) in style, but which was passionate about local sourcing.

3. Mid to upper price range restaurant that was innovative but which did not appear to make a feature of local sourcing.

4. Foreign or speciality restaurant.

Cafés

5. Café/tea room that was passionate about local sourcing.

6. Upmarket modern café that did not appear to make a feature of local sourcing.

7. Inexpensive tourist café.

8. Café attached to popular visitor attraction.

9. Fish and chip takeaway.

Pubs

10. 'Gastro-pub' with a reputation for good-quality food and beer.

11. Standard pub offering typical pub fare at accessible prices.

I selected at least one interviewee from each study region to represent each of the above categories, giving 24 interviewees in total. Profiles of the establishments are available in Appendix 1. Table 2 shows how interviewees were distributed between the study regions and the numbered categories listed above.

Table 2. Interviewees by type and study area

Type of establishment (numbers correspond to those in the list of categories given previously)	Number of Lake District interviewees	Number of Exmoor interviewees
1	1	1
2	2*	1
3	1	1
4	1	1
5	1	1
6	1	1
7	1	1
8	2*	1
9	1	1
10	1	1
11	1	1
Totals	13	11

There was also the question of how to select interviewees within the sub-types listed above. In some cases, this decision was straightforward. For example, there was only one good example of a gastro-pub (type 10) in the Exmoor

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* These categories had two interviewees as a result of the decision to incorporate the results of two successful pilot interviews.

area. However, in other instances there were a number of establishments to choose from. In these cases, I used tourist guide-books, telephone directories and an Internet search to compile a list of possible candidates for each category. Within the categories, I had no reason to suspect that any one establishment would give particularly different answers to another. However, I decided to prioritise establishments that were in prime tourist areas – for example, those located in the centre of towns such as Bowness-on-Windermere or Lynmouth – to ensure that I selected businesses for whom tourism would play a major role. Where possible, I contacted potential respondents by email in the first instance, and then followed this up with a phone call if I had no response. The interviews were also scheduled for January, February and March – a time when eating places were likely to be quieter and when owners would have more time to talk to me. These tactics ensured that I had a relatively high success rate. In total, 29 interviewees were contacted and only five were unable to take part due to pressures of work or being away on holiday. In cases where my first choice interviewee was unavailable, I would contact the second establishment on my list, and so on.

Pilot interviews were also carried out in the Lake District for this group of interviewees, as well as for the food producer interviews described in the following section. These pilot studies enabled me to ensure that the questions I was asking were appropriate and practicable to discuss within the context of the interview. As a result of the pilot study, I discovered that, although my questions covered the right topics, the interview schedules contained too much material for a 30-40 minute interview. I therefore developed more

concise versions for the main study. However, apart from being slightly too long, the pilot interviews were otherwise very successful and I therefore decided to use the data I gained from them as part of the main study.

3.7 Food producers

Interviewing café, pub and restaurant owners gave me an insight into the structures operating within the food and tourism sector. However, to complete the picture, it was essential that I also looked at sourcing issues from a food producer's viewpoint. Once again, food producers were asked to give their definition of local food and their impressions of the characteristics of the region's food industry. They were then asked to provide details of production methods, ingredient sourcing and marketing, before going on to discuss where they had chosen to sell their products and why. Interview schedules for the food producers are given in Appendix 2.

These questions enabled me to get a better idea of how food and place interacted with tourism. Most importantly, they also provided further information on the structures affecting the sector. For example, in relation to wholesale, many producers stated that they found delivery to be difficult and costly, particularly if their customers were ordering small amounts of product. In such cases, producers were sometimes forced to introduce a minimum order or a high charge for delivery. Another solution was to tell customers that they would only deliver on a set day every other week. There was also debate about the best ways to sell products, with some producers favouring the higher prices available through direct sale at farmers' markets, while other

producers preferred to get into supermarkets in the local area – a decision that resulted in lower profit margins but a higher volume of sales.

Again, my aim was to conduct interviews with as wide a range of local food producers as possible. In order to do this, I selected interviewees to represent the principal types of product available in each region[4]. In the case of the Lake District, the main products were as follows:

- Bakery products

- Drinks

- Meat and dairy products

- Jams and preserves

Exmoor had a slightly different range of locally produced foods. The main types were as follows:

- Confectionery

- Meat and dairy products

- Drinks

- Jams, preserves and honey

- Fish

I used these major product types to ensure that I selected a diverse range of producers – giving me 17 interviewees in total (8 from the Lake District and 9 from Exmoor). Appendix 1 provides profiles of these interviewees and Tables 3 and 4 show how interviewees were distributed by study area and product type.

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[4] There was some overlap here as three types of product – meat and dairy products, drinks and jams and preserves – were found in both regions.

Table 3. Lake District interviewees

Product type	Number of interviewees
Bakery products	2
Meat and dairy products	2
Drinks	2
Jams and preserves	2

Table 4. Exmoor interviewees

Product type	Number of interviewees
Confectionery	1
Meat and dairy products	3
Drinks	2
Jams, preserves and honey	2
Fish	1

When recruiting participants, I chose to concentrate on businesses that made a feature of their locality. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, although every firm must be geographically local to somewhere as a result of its physical location, a key argument of this thesis is that 'localness' is about more than just physical proximity to place. For example, the Nestlé factory is located in York and yet, although it contributes to the local economy by providing jobs, few people would claim that Nestlé chocolate is 'local' Yorkshire chocolate. Instead, it could be argued that what makes a company 'local' is its decision to use aspects of its region's geography, culture and traditions as a marketing tool (Boniface, 2003, Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001). In short, 'local' companies are able to claim that their product is unique and special not only because it has been made in a particular place, but also because it has been produced on a small-scale using a special recipe or production method, perhaps signified by a local name (Tregear *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, in order to explore the extent to which place

was used to sell food to tourists, I had to interview firms that had made a deliberate decision to promote themselves in this way.

A second reason for selecting such firms was that I needed to find out about the structures relating to people's food choices. By talking to producers who had made a feature of their locality, I was able to understand more about how these structures were enabling or constraining them and how they were using their agency in response to these circumstances.

In order to select interviewees by the categories given in Tables 3 and 4, I complied a list of suitable candidates using the trade directories of regional food groups such as Made in Cumbria, Taste of the West and the Exmoor Producers' Association. I also used stallholder listings from the food tents of local agricultural shows and looked through the archives of local newspapers for producers mentioned in local food-related stories. The businesses on this list all made a feature of their locality and therefore all were equally suitable candidates for interview. However, in order to get the broadest range of responses possible, within each category I tried to select businesses that were as varied as possible in terms of the kind of products they produced and the size of their business. For example, in the meat and dairy category for the Lake District, my interviewees consisted of a small cheese producer whose products were sold mainly in Cumbria, and a large meat producer whose products were sold throughout the UK. I then followed the same strategy that I used with the café and restaurant owners: namely, an initial email followed by a telephone call if required. These interviews also took place during January,

February and March to ensure that I was contacting producers at a relatively quiet time of year. This time, refusal rates were slightly higher for the simple reason that businesses tended to be small in nature with a high volume of work being undertaken by a relatively small number of staff. Consequently, 9 of the 26 people contacted were too busy to take part. In cases where my first choice interviewee was unavailable, I would move on to the second person on my list, and so on.

3.8 Local food and tourism experts and promoters

These interviews were the most varied in content because they dealt with a wide variety of experts, from journalists specialising in local food issues within the study areas to regional tourist boards and food bodies and, finally, national food and tourism policy experts from Defra, the Countryside Agency and Visit Britain.

These interviews had several functions, the most important of which was to provide the regional and national contexts for my interviews with tourists, food producers and café, pub and restaurant owners. For example, in order to understand the interaction of structure and agency within the food and tourism sectors, I had to have a knowledge of the relevant policies operating at the national and local levels. Furthermore, because my research was concerned with exploring the relationship between holiday food and a sense of place, I had to talk to people who were responsible for enhancing and promoting this relationship, in order to discover what they considered to be local produce, what images and values they had chosen to promote local food and drink to

visitors, and how important tourists were in the development of their planning and marketing strategies. At the local level, therefore, I chose to interview all those connected with promoting and developing the local food and tourism industries, ranging from local food journalists, through to tourist boards and regional food groups and the regional development agencies responsible for policy at the regional level. At the national scale, I interviewed representatives from the relevant departments of DEFRA and the Countryside Agency because these organisations develop policies and conduct research into local food issues. I also chose to speak to the national tourism agency, Visit Britain, because it had developed a marketing strategy focused on food (Visit Britain, 2006). At the time of interviewing, the National Trust had also launched a new local sourcing initiative for its shops, and I therefore interviewed a buyer who worked for the organisation to investigate this further. Table 5 shows the job titles and distribution of interviewees by study region. A full list of the 16 interviewees is given in Appendix 1 and topic guides for interviews are given in Appendix 2.

Table 5. Local food and tourism experts and promoters

Job title	Number of interviewees: Lake District	Number of interviewees: Exmoor	Number of interviewees: National
Local food journalists/writers	2	1	N/a
Tourist board representatives	1	1	N/a
Regional food group representatives	3	2	N/a
Regional Development Agency representatives	1	1	N/a
DEFRA regional and local food representative	N/a	N/a	1

Visit Britain representative	N/a	N/a	1
The Countryside Agency representative	N/a	N/a	1
National Trust buyer for gift shops	N/a	N/a	1

The interviews with local food and tourism experts and promoters had the best response rate in that all 16 interviewees approached agreed to take part. This was not surprising given that those contacted had a particular interest in the topic and – in some cases – a duty to promote it. These were the only type of interviews that were not piloted because, of necessity, each interview varied in content to take into account the issues relevant to the person or organisation in question. However, I waited until all the interviews with tourists, café, pub and restaurant owners and food producers had been completed before arranging the expert and promoter interviews to ensure that relevant issues raised by the earlier interviews could be taken into consideration when designing the interview schedules.

The preceding discussion demonstrates how interviews with a variety of different groups resulted in large amounts of rich, qualitative data being generated. However, in order to address my research questions in greater depth, I also introduced some quantitative techniques to the study in the form of the menu collection and analysis, as the following section demonstrates

3.9 Menu analysis

The menu analysis formed an important component of the research because it enabled me to see how factors such as quality, place and authenticity – all of which were vital for my third research question (p.6) – were being used to market foods in the study areas.

Collecting and analysing every menu within the study areas would have been impractical, so I chose to collect menus from all the eating establishments within selected towns and villages instead. In the case of the Lake District, I collected 39 menus from Bowness-on-Windermere and Grasmere as my selected towns and, on Exmoor, I collected 41 menus from Lynton, Lynmouth, Porlock and Dunster[5].

Before beginning any quantitative analysis, I read through the menus to see what strategies were being used to promote certain dishes. This process revealed that the most popular promotional strategies were those focused on emphasising place, authenticity, food quality and tradition. These strategies varied between establishments in terms of their use and intensity. For example, attempts to link food to place ranged from very specific references to the local origins of ingredients, such as "Lyn Valley salmon" or "Ullswater trout", to broader spatial descriptions such as "Exmoor lamb" or even "British beef" (p.247). The inclusion of local speciality dishes on the menu – such as Cumberland sausage or cream teas – or the use of a place-specific name for

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[5] I chose four settlements for Exmoor as opposed to two for the Lake District because Exmoor's towns and villages were much smaller than their Lake District counterparts. Therefore it was necessary to visit more places to get a similar number of menus from Exmoor.

the establishment were other popular strategies that were used to market foods.

Having established what kinds of tactics were being employed, I began building a spreadsheet that contained sufficient qualitative and quantitative information to enable me to analyse these strategies in the ways described in Chapter 6.6 (p.246). Each establishment's menu was given a separate entry on the spreadsheet that included the following key components:

- Name of establishment.

- Is this name place specific? (Yes/no) *E.g.* "The Wordsworth Hotel", "Dunster lunchbox", "Whortleberry Tea Room".

- Location (Lake District or Exmoor).

- Price bracket of establishment[6].

- Specific references to origins of local ingredients, by words used *e.g.* "Lyn Valley salmon", "Waberthwaite air-dried ham", "Ullswater trout".

- Non-specific references to local place, by words used and frequency (*n*) *e.g.* "local" x *n*, "farmhouse" x *n*, "Exmoor" x *n*, "traditional" x *n*.

- References – explicit or implied – to food quality, by words used and frequency *e.g.* "prime" x *n*, "homemade" x *n*, "fresh" x *n*, "organic" x *n*.

- Inclusion of well-known local speciality dishes on the menu, by words used *e.g.* "Grasmere Gingerbread", "Cumberland sausage", "cream tea", "fudge".

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[6] Establishments where the average price of a main course dish was over £10 were defined as 'high' price bracket; those where the average price was £5-£10 were defined as 'average', and those where the average price was under £5 were defined as 'low' price bracket.

- Specific references to non-local origins of ingredients, by words used *e.g.* "Wiltshire ham", "Scottish salmon", "French brandy", "Italian biscotti".

- Inclusion of additional information about product origins or traditions, by words used *e.g.* "All meals are prepared and cooked on the premises using fresh produce sourced locally wherever possible".

By including qualitative and quantitative information in the spreadsheet, I was able to analyse the menus in a variety of ways. For example, as described in Chapter 6.6, I was able to calculate statistical information such as the percentage of menus using terms such as "homemade", "fresh" and "organic", and then compare how these percentages varied by location and price bracket. However, because the spreadsheet also contained qualitative information, it was also possible to look at the imagery associated with the various descriptions offered. When combined with evidence from the interviews with café and restaurant owners, this allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which foods were promoted and why they were being marketed in this way.

Having outlined the techniques employed during the fieldwork, the following section describes how I dealt with some of the practical difficulties involved in the research, such as when to schedule interviews and how to contact participants.

3.10 Practical considerations

Due to the range of people covered by the interviews and my wish to maximise response rates, I had to schedule my fieldwork carefully. For example, I focused on speaking to tourists during the summer and early autumn when they were most available, thus leaving late autumn and winter free for interviewing businesses, who were too busy to be interviewed during the height of the tourist season.

A related consideration was that many of my interviewees were members of the general public or small business owners who were not accustomed to being interviewed. For this reason, I carried out the interviews with tourists, café, pub and restaurant owners and food producers in person. This helped people relax more easily than if I had tried to question them over the telephone. However, for reasons relating to travel time and cost efficiency, I interviewed several food and tourism experts over the telephone, using special recording software, with the permission of the respondents. This worked well because I was talking with busy people who were used to being interviewed and they were therefore happy to talk over the telephone at a time that was convenient to them.

In all my interviews – whether in person or over the telephone – I would ask permission before recording answers and, in the case of the businesses, I also assured them that I would not publish any sensitive commercial information concerning their company. By using a Dictaphone, MP3 player or telephone recording equipment, I was able to concentrate fully on what the

person was saying, which would have been harder if I had had to take notes. After the interview, I was able to download these recordings and transcribe them in full[7].

However, despite conducting pilot research before beginning the main process of data collection, other difficulties emerged in the course of the fieldwork and I did my best to deal with these as they occurred. The first problem was the difficulty of contacting manual workers for interview at Bath and Lancaster universities. Unlike academic and administrative staff, cleaners, caterers and porters were not contactable by email and this was particularly problematic at Bath where I could not approach potential interviewees in person. As a result, I had to resort to a snowball sampling technique, where I asked my academic and administrative respondents to recommend cleaners or porters that they knew from their departments. I was then able to contact the individuals in person to explain more about the project. This strategy proved effective but took a considerable amount of time and effort. During the course of the fieldwork, I also became more adept at the practicalities involved in interviewing. For example, I discovered that the audibility of the recording could suffer if I was outside on a windy day or if there was a lot of background noise going on. If possible, I took steps to control these factors – for example, by not conducting interviews in the vicinity of busy roads and by being mindful of where I placed my recording equipment. I also learnt that, if I had arranged an interview far in advance, it was a good idea to telephone the day before to check that the interviewee was still

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[7] All transcripts are available for inspection by the examiners of this thesis.

available. This was especially important if I was making a special journey; I once had the experience of driving 60 miles only to find that my interviewee had forgotten the arrangement and gone out for a meeting.

The final issue I had to deal with was that of particularly garrulous or reticent respondents who would say too much or too little. Reticent interviewees were easier to manage because I would always go into an interview prepared with a series of prompts that I could use if necessary. These helped to bring out more information than was initially offered. However, overly talkative respondents were harder to handle because I did not want to be too assertive or have too much influence on the structure of the discussion. In these cases, I did the best that I could and used the prompts on my interview schedule to ensure that the conversation remained as focused and relevant as possible. Although such inter-personal dynamics could make things difficult, they were also what made interviewing such a rewarding process. At the end of my fieldwork, I had spoken to over 150 people and I would frequently come away from such encounters feeling privileged to have gained an insight into someone else's story. I also felt that, on many occasions, participants had enjoyed sharing their views about what was important to them, and this was a satisfying feeling to have.

This chapter shows how I needed to talk to a wide range of actors in order to get a variety of perspectives on the interactions between food and tourism. However, this approach resulted in a very large number of interviews for a study of this nature. As a result, I had to give careful thought as to how to

handle and interpret the volume of interviews that I had. The concluding section of this chapter describes how I dealt with this issue through the creation of a rigorous analytic framework.

3.11 Conclusion – interpreting the data through an analytic structure

The first step in the analysis process involved transcribing the interviews. Rather than leaving transcription until all the interviews were complete, I tried to keep pace by transcribing throughout the data collection period. Doing so enabled me to 'immerse' myself in the data (Mason, 2002) and ensured that I was able to fill in any inaudible gaps in the recordings while the original conversation was still fresh in my mind.

During transcription, I kept a notebook of key ideas and recurring themes and connections in the data and this, combined with a review of the relevant literature, as described in Chapter 2, helped me develop an analytic structure of themes and sub-themes through which I could address my research questions. This structure also formed the basis for coding the data. Due to the sheer volume of transcripts involved, I used Atlas Ti to help with this process. After an initial coding of the data, I was able to review and refine my codes so that the final analytic structure was based around the following issues:

1. Involvement. This theme was influenced by Long (2004), De Botton (2002) and Warde and Martens (2000). It was particularly relevant to my first research question, which asked 'what role does food/drink play in the tourist experience?' It included the following considerations:

- Holiday food/drink experiences that proved to be special or memorable.

- Holiday food/drink experiences that were <u>not</u> considered to be special or memorable.

- Anticipation/expectation in relation to holiday food and drink.

- Holiday food disasters.

2. The different and the familiar. This theme was based upon Urry (1990), Plog (1974), Cohen (1972), Warde (1997) and others. It was concerned with my second research question which asked 'how do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home?' It included the following considerations:

- Difference *i.e.* holiday food/drink experiences that were different from home.

- Familiarity *i.e.* holiday food/drink experiences that were similar to home.

- Perceptions of risk/fear in relation to holiday food and drink.

- Strategies for choosing holiday food/drink *e.g.* using a guide book, researching on the Internet, asking friends for advice *etc.*

- Justifications for choosing certain foods/drinks while on holiday or for choosing to run certain kinds of food business.

- Branding and other efforts to create an 'image' for a product or eatery.

3. Place and authenticity. This theme was taken from theorists like Bell and Valentine (1997) and Boniface (2003). It related to my third research question which asked 'what is the role of locality and

authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?' It included the following considerations:

- What is 'local'?

- Reasons for the emergence of local food.

- Food/drink described as specific to a place or food/drink described as placeless.

- Food/drink described as 'authentic' or culturally specific in some way.

- Food/drink being used as souvenirs or being transferred to the home setting via new recipes from the holiday destination, repeat purchasing of a key product, *etc.*

4. Constraints. This theme was very important to interviewees but had not been extensively discussed in the literature. It related to my fourth research question which asked 'what impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food and drink sector?' It included the following considerations:

- The role of supermarkets.

- The importance of tourism to food producers.

- Constraints acting on small businesses in the food tourism sector *e.g.* government policy and credit terms of multiple retailers*.*

- Constraints acting on tourists when making their holiday food/drink choices *e.g.* the needs of children, income, knowledge factors, shopping opportunities/restrictions at the destination, *etc.*

The next four chapters (4-7) present and analyse the findings generated in response to these four main themes. Working within these themes enabled me to compare and contrast the viewpoints of different actors involved in the production and consumption of the holiday food experience throughout the food chain so that I became conscious of the main issues around which people would agree or disagree. I was also able to look for differences and similarities between the Lake District and Exmoor data so that I could get a better grasp of the factors that were key to these study regions. In addressing these issues, I also found myself tracing the interactions between structure and agency inherent in the relationships between food and tourism.

CHAPTER 4

INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Introduction

Exploring the ways in which tourists become involved with food and drink while on holiday was crucial to this study's first research question which asks 'what role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?' Current understandings indicate that exploring the food and drink of a destination can be a way of reaching beyond the purely visual, as epitomised by Urry's 'tourist gaze' (1990), so that the visitor uses a wider range of senses to become more involved in a destination. By enabling us to engage with a place and its people in this way, it is argued that food and drink may also allow us to develop a more reflexive understanding of ourselves (Long, 2004a, Germann Molz, 2004).

However, as Chapter 2.3 explained, involvement is not a passive process because it also requires input from the consumer. During interviews, it became clear that degrees of involvement varied greatly – from the person who wanted to try different dishes, to the person who viewed eating and drinking as a purely functional process and who did not notice anything unusual about his or her eating on that particular holiday.

The interesting question is why this is so. De Botton (2002) has emphasised that, if we make the effort to adopt an attentive mindset, we can act as an interested tourist on a daily basis when interacting with our own

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P = Interviews with food producers

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neighbourhoods. It is possible that special occasions, such as holidays or eating out, could encourage us to adopt this kind of mindset as, according to Urry (1995) and Warde and Martens (2000), both activities are eagerly anticipated events that attract high levels of expectation.

In order to tease out the complexities of touristic involvement with food, this chapter begins by examining the role of expectation and anticipation in relation to holiday food and drink. I then move on to analyse the factors involved in the creation of a memorable holiday food experience before turning to consider the reverse scenarios of non-memorable and disastrous experiences. Cohen and Avieli (2004) explain that perceptions of risk in relation to holiday food can have an impact on the choices tourists make, while my own research suggests that disastrous or disappointing experiences can occur when a tourist's expectations of a particular holiday are not met. For this reason, negative experiences are also discussed as part of this chapter.

4.2 Anticipation and expectation

Evidence from the interviews showed support for Urry (1995) and Warde and Martens (2000) in that participants enjoyed looking forward to what they expected would be the pleasurable experience of eating on holiday. With the exception of X5 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University), who confessed to finding holidays stressful, this propensity to anticipate pleasurable times extended to almost everyone, from young children holidaying with their parents on Exmoor, who were excited at the promise of indulging in holiday

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'treats' such as ice-cream and fudge[8], to X4 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University), who was looking forward to an imminent visit to Finland: *"I do particularly like to visit families when I'm in Finland who are friends because they do tend to cook very, very good food… There's one particular family I have in mind – we're going there on Monday – and I'm anticipating going to visit them because the wife is just an outstanding cook and I know she'll make something that I'll really, really like and that will be very different from here."*

X4's example illustrates that, perhaps for obvious reasons, anticipation seems to play a bigger role where repeat experiences are concerned. It is as if particularly good memories of holiday food and drink stick in the mind and, next time we visit that place, we seek to recapture that feeling by returning to the same restaurant or trying the same dish. However, repeat experiences can also be risky because, although the place or the type of food can be revisited, the original experience can never be recaptured in its entirety and the visitor can be left feeling disappointed as X9 (40s, female, administrator, Bath University) described: *"Occasionally we've been back to places where we've been before and it's not been as good as the first time – maybe that's because of your memory, rather than the reality. Maybe it was just a wonderful day when the sun was shining on your back…"*

As discussed in Section 4.3, this indicates that our responses to holiday food experiences are influenced by a wide range of contextual factors, from the food and setting itself, to our companions, the weather, and even how we are

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[8] H11 (party of four, Exmoor, self catering)
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feeling on that particular day. The importance of context means that attempts to recreate an experience will always carry a risk of disappointment because, in essence, every event is unique and only partially repeatable. For example, we may return to our favourite restaurant in the Lake District, only to find that the menu has changed and that driving rain has obscured the glorious view from the window. Or perhaps, on this occasion, we cannot stop ourselves worrying about work, and this spoils the experience. Even if everything could be kept the same, it could be argued that our second visit will never be as good because the element of surprise will be missing. The first time we visit, our enjoyment stems from the fact that it is all a delightful surprise that exceeds our expectations. By contrast, on our second visit, we are *expecting* a wonderful experience. This may be exactly what we get but, because we are not surprised to find this, we may feel the experience has been simply ordinary and as predicted.

However, other interviewees were looking forward, not to specific meals or restaurants, but to the general social experience of eating out while on holiday. X3 (50s, female, lecturer, Bath University) said that food itself was not a vital part of her holidays. However, she enjoyed taking time over long, shared meals with family and friends while on holiday because, for her, holidays were more about spending time with loved ones than any specific foods or activities *per se*. Equally X29 (40s, male, porter, Lancaster University) did not consider food to be particularly important, yet he was also looking forward to the promise of a lavish Christmas dinner with his wife at a new hotel on their forthcoming holiday to Tenerife.

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> *Rebecca Sims: So this hotel you're going to at Christmas, you'll be –*
>
> *X29: Wined and dined, yes. Christmas dinner's in. Yes, everything's in. I'm looking forward to it – very much. Because it says on the itinerary that gentlemen must fetch a jacket with them for the Christmas dinner.*

X29's anticipation of his Christmas dinner could support Ryan's (2002a) claim that tourism is about 'peak experiences' which can form the highlight of a person's holiday. However, although such experiences were important to my interviewees, X3's comments show that 'smaller' pleasures, such as leisurely meals, can form an equally vital part of our expectations prior to our visit.

I would also argue that the literature does not explore the different ways in which we can facilitate or modify this process of anticipation, because interviewees' expectations were influenced, either consciously through their research about the destination, or unconsciously, as a result of personal preconceptions. Therefore, they had built up a picture of what the food would be like at their destination and, as Urry (1995) has argued, such anticipation tended to influence their judgements of the eating experiences that they had in that place.

For example, particular food experiences were sometimes considered more memorable because they were contrary to expectations. This was the case for H69 (party of three, Lake District, luxury hotel), who described a surprising find during a holiday to Wales:

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" We were just staying at this farm that had a cottage attached – it was in a village in the middle of nowhere – and we asked the people at the farm for their recommendation for somewhere to eat. And they said: "Well, there's a pub in the village that's very popular". And we thought: "Oh. A village pub. That sounds a bit… Well, alright, we'll give it a go". And it was just amazing – it turns out they had this cordon bleu chef and people poured in for miles around to eat there. It was lovely, and… I think one of the reasons why it stands out so much was that we were just so surprised to find it in that setting."

If this group's expectations had been higher – if the pub had been listed in the Egon Ronay Guide, for example – they might not have rated the experience so highly. Instead, they went along with low expectations and were pleased and surprised when these were surpassed. Therefore our judgements of holiday food and drink are not absolute, but relative to our expectations. Following from Urry (1995), I would argue that the fact that we anticipate what our holidays – and our holiday meals – will be like, shows that our involvement with a given destination and its food begins long before we get there. How we respond to that place on arrival will then be influenced by how the 'reality' compares to the image that we were holding in our minds. This can prove problematic when we expect a better experience than we actually get, resulting in disappointment.

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There are also geographical and cost components to our expectations. In relation to cost, I found that the level of expectation, and subsequent level of satisfaction, was related to the price of the experience because higher costs had the effect of raising visitors' expectations, with the result that they were more likely to be disappointed. For example, X23 (30s, female, secretary, Lancaster University) explained that she had expected more from her visit to an expensive restaurant while on holiday in Wales because of the price of the experience.

"We decided one day that we were going to go to what looked like an extremely smart restaurant… It was this place where you could look right out over the sea and it was all nicely laid out and everything but, actually, for the price it was, I didn't feel that the food was really that special. You know, I didn't feel like we got that much 'extra' out of it than we would if we'd made the same thing at home."

Geography also proved important, with interviewees altering their expectations in relation to their preconceptions about a destination and its food. Some destinations seemed to have acquired a reputation on the tourist grapevine for having bad food, with the result that people expected to get ill when going there, as X24 (20s, male, library assistant, Lancaster University) explained: *"I've had bad experiences with food – been to Egypt and Israel in one holiday and, although the food was very, very nice, it was the usual thing about Egypt or Africa or some places – you get a dodgy stomach and you're feeling sick, and that affects it a bit".* Conversely, countries like France and Italy were seen

as having an excellent reputation for food, with the result that visitors were sometimes disappointed, as H3 (party of 5, Exmoor, average hotel) explained:

> *H3(1): We went to Italy hoping for lots of lovely Italian food, and because it was a tour party, the hotel supplied incredibly English food, starting off with brown soup every day.*
>
> *H3(2): Yes, it was every day for a week.*
>
> *H3(1): And we complained and said, you know 'Please we want something Italian' and they said* [puts on a snooty voice]: *'The British like brown soup and meat and two vegetables'!… It was awful. Dreadful. So disappointing.*

It was also interesting to note that interviewees often had low expectations of holiday food in Britain and, consequently, they did not expect food to be a feature of the holiday when staying in the UK. However, when asked about their experiences of food abroad, they became more enthusiastic and explained that their expectations were higher and that food was a more important component of these holidays. This feeling was exacerbated by the fact that food abroad was deemed to be 'different' to that of the home setting and therefore visitors seemed to put more thought into researching and anticipating it.

In addition to cost factors or geography, peoples' personal characteristics also played a part in their anticipation and enjoyment of holiday foods. I found evidence of two key factors influencing peoples' expectations of holiday food.

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These factors were the interviewee's occupation (for the staff interviews) or type of accommodation (for the current tourist interviews) and level of interest in food. When combined, these factors resulted in three broad types of expectation. The first type tended to involve academic staff and those staying in smart or luxury hotels[9] who also had a major interest in food. This group had consistently high expectations of their holiday food experiences and, as a result, they were more vulnerable to disappointment as H33 (party of 4, Exmoor, smart hotel) explained when asked about his favourite culinary experiences:

> *If we go for home* [i.e. a UK holiday], *it would be the* […] *Hotel, which is now closed. Interestingly, that was one of the first hotels that I stayed in too, and I think the trouble is that your expectations get higher and higher and you get fussier and fussier. I don't think snobby is the right word to use, but you do – your expectations just get higher and higher. So if I ate that food now, I don't know if I'd have the same reaction as I did 10 years ago."*

An analysis of quotations in Atlas Ti revealed that almost one third of those with academic jobs or who were staying in smart or luxury hotels had made reference to disappointing holiday food experiences, while only one fifth of the other interviewees had done so. As Warde and Martens (2000) have suggested, those with higher incomes and levels of education will probably have had more opportunities to travel and eat out in a variety of

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[9] 'Smart' hotels were defined as three-star establishments offering a wide range of facilities and a high level of comfort. 'Luxury' hotels were those listed as four-star and above and were only found in the Lake District (see p.108).
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establishments. They will therefore have more experiences against which to judge the foods that they find on their holidays. When combined with a high level of personal interest in food, this can have the effect of raising their expectations, with the result that disappointment is often not far behind. The fact that experienced travellers and diners often choose more expensive hotels and restaurants can also increase the likelihood of the disappointment that they are trying to avoid when the meal turns out to be unworthy of its cost. As H71 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel) stated:

H71(1): You cannot get – or very rarely – something that's really good.

H71(2): I think it's the case that, because we cook nice food ourselves, we object to paying for it if it's not up to standard.

RS: Because you're good at cooking yourself and you can – ?

H71(2): We think so, yes.

H71(1): Because I mean sometimes they have an upmarket restaurant… and they charge us the earth, but you're just not getting the [right] *standard of food.*

At the other end of the spectrum, there was evidence of a contrasting attitude which professed that you were lucky – and should be grateful – if you did not get ill while abroad. This attitude was more prevalent among manual workers or those staying in youth hostels or holiday camps, with no such quotations coming from academics, or those staying in smart or luxury hotels. These respondents also had little interest in food and felt that bad food was to be expected in the course of foreign travel. However, their persistently low

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expectations of holiday food meant that they were more likely to be satisfied with the culinary experiences encountered on holiday. As X28's (50s, female, cleaner, Lancaster University) example showed:

> *RS: This last holiday, how did you find most of the foods and drinks out there? Did you enjoy it?*
> *X28: It was brilliant. Never ever once have any of us been poorly.*

However, those with consistently high or consistently low expectations were in a minority, as more than 70 per cent of interviewees would raise or lower their expectations according to the type of holiday they were taking. Respondents in this group represented a wide range of occupations and types of accommodation but, although they appreciated and enjoyed holiday food where possible, they did not consider food to be a vital part of every holiday and, as a result, they were protected from the kind of disappointments described by H71 and H33 (p.141 & 140). They were also wary of expecting too much from their experiences because past holidays had taught them to be more realistic about their chances of success.

Their example shows that most people's expectations result from a cumulative learning process. We may start off with high hopes for our holiday dining but, if our experiences teach us that holiday food and drink can be expensive and mediocre, we learn to temper these expectations in order to avoid disappointment. As X17 (30s, male, professor, Lancaster University) said when describing the food on a recent family holiday to Scotland: *"It was just like basic pub crap, really. You know, it just wasn't very nice really. It was just*

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bland, very predictable – but we weren't disappointed because that's what you get in pubs generally, I think." Crucially, these respondents were also able to alter their expectations in response to different kinds of holiday. For example, X1 (30s, female, lecturer, Bath University) had high hopes of enjoying the food on her family's trip to Portugal but, while on a shorter UK break to Milford-on-Sea, she was happy to accept *"a standard burger and chips type diet"* because that was all she expected of the UK.

In summary, therefore, understanding visitors' expectations is a vital part of understanding how they respond to holiday food experiences. As described above, expectations can be influenced by contextual factors such as the cost of the experience and our preconceptions about the place itself – hence the 'Italian food good, English food bad' attitude expressed by some respondents – as well as by our own personal characteristics. Most travellers display dynamic and contextual attitudes towards food which enables them to alter their expectations according to the type of vacation so that, while they may expect more from the food on a visit to Italy, they will not expect the same from a visit to Exmoor. This allows them to protect themselves from the kind of disappointments suffered by those for whom food always play a central role in the holiday.

I would therefore suggest that, although my study does not permit any precise quantification, this range of tourist attitudes could be represented by a simple graph (Fig.4). At one end are those totally uninterested in food and with low expectations and, at the other, there are the well-travelled 'foodies' with high

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expectations. In between are the great majority who are able to display more dynamic attitudes to the foods and drinks they find on holiday. They will appreciate good experiences if they arise but will not automatically expect to find them.

Figure 4. Distribution of attitudes to holiday food
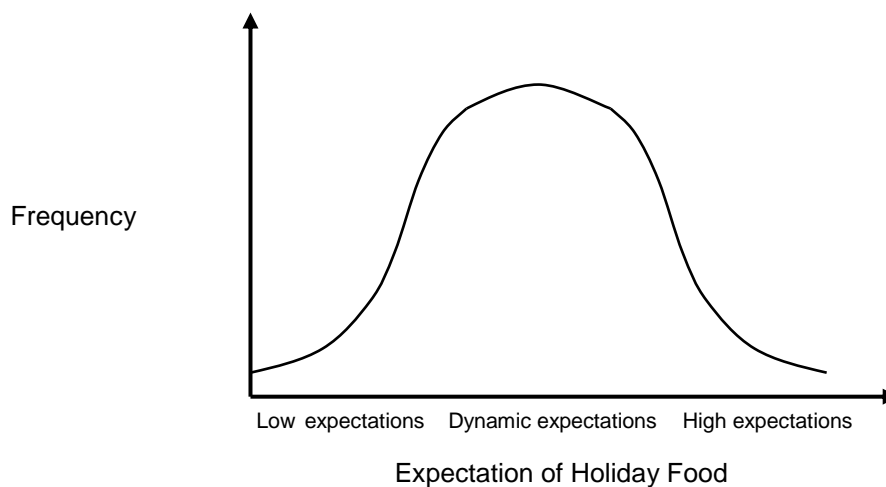
In view of these findings, and in the light of the interpretive approach taken by this study, I would argue that we need to add an analysis of anticipation to the host of contextual factors already explored by both food and tourism researchers. For example, in order to fully understand why someone has enjoyed their holiday so much, we need to ask not only about the weather, the setting, the company and other factors physically present in the situation – we also need to enquire about that person's prior expectations of the experience. From a critical realist standpoint, it could be argued that expectations constitute the preconditions for the holiday and, as such, they may have a dramatic impact on whether that particular experience is deemed to have been successful. This process also involves a reciprocal feedback mechanism

where the person's latest experience will influence his or her expectations, which then go on to form the preconditions for the next holiday, and so on. Thus expectations are dynamic and are modified by each successive experience.

4.3 Memorable holiday food experiences

Closely related to anticipation was the issue of memorable and non-memorable holiday food and drink experiences. Interviewees were asked to look back over all the holidays that they could remember to see whether they had an experience of food and drink that stood out because they had enjoyed it so much. Those who answered in the affirmative were asked to describe this memory and explain why it was special to them.

The results showed that memorable holiday food experiences are common because, in total, just over 70 per cent of interviewees had had such an experience. At first glance, the memories themselves varied widely – from H8 (party of 5, Exmoor, caravanning) who recalled cooking sausages bought from the local butcher that *"actually tasted how I remember sausages used to taste when I was a child"*, to X13's (20s, male, porter, Bath University) memories of sharing fermented mares' milk – a local delicacy – with Mongolian tradesmen while on a long-distance race in the country. However, further analysis revealed that these diverse experiences had many factors in common.

Firstly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, interviewees recalled meals where the food itself had been of high standards. For example, X12 (50s, male, porter,

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Bath University) remembered a pleasurable dining experience in Italy: *"We went to Sorrento and they've got a square there and there were all pizza bars there. And we went into one, and the pizzas in there were outstanding – absolutely outstanding."* H44 (party of 3, Lake District, caravanning) also explained that they always liked to visit Wallace Arnold hotels because they knew the standards were good. For these interviewees, their most memorable experience was simply an occasion where they liked the food.

Despite this, I would argue that the quality of the food itself has a limited influence on whether an experience is deemed to be memorable because 40 per cent of quotations relating to memorable experiences did not mention the quality of the food at all. This is not to say that food quality is unimportant – quite understandably, nobody enthused about a meal where the food was horrid. However, it appears that, once the food has reached a certain threshold of acceptability, further increases in its quality do not automatically make the experience more memorable, because it is here that other contextual factors about the meal become important. As X29 (40s, male, porter, Lancaster University) told me, although he preferred the food at the luxury hotel he had stayed at in Benidorm, his holiday to the Philippines was more of an *"adventure"* because he got to see people, places and foods that he had never encountered before.

Of course, any discussion of context must make reference to people's expectations because, as described in the preceding section, an element of surprise can make for a more memorable experience. This may explain why

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several interviewees cited 'first' experiences as memorable – for example, H21 (party of 3, Exmoor, smart hotel) who recalled her first trip to Italy: *"I was just thinking of the first time we went to Italy... That kind of stands out as being the first experience of Italy and the first ever food I remember being really nice. I suppose it was my first adventure abroad really, so maybe that was it."*

There was also evidence of a counter-trend, whereby four interviewees (H30, H64, X20, X22) cited their latest good experience as the most memorable. However, such temporal influences were relatively minor when compared to the effect of other contextual factors – namely the role played by the physical setting of the experience; the enjoyment of what interviewees considered to be an 'authentic' experience; the consumption of 'different' foods and, finally, social aspects relating to one's companions. These issues will now be discussed in turn.

4.3.1 Physical setting

The fact that almost 30 per cent of quotations relating to memorable holiday food experiences mentioned the physical backdrop to the memory is clear evidence that the visual component – described by Urry (1990) as 'the tourist gaze' – remains a vital part of tourism, as interviewees described being seduced by everything from the presentation of the food to the views from the restaurant window. H2's (party of 5, Exmoor, average hotel) Japanese experience is a good example of the role that a stunning visual setting can play:

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"A couple of the Japanese restaurants we went to, you would just never see anything like the way food was presented – kind of 10 or 12 course banquets with everything – it was a work of art… the nicest restaurant was set in a sort of picture-book Japanese water garden where you were… led along a winding path across stepping stones by a kimono-clad waitress, and then you had your meal in a kind of tearoom – a sort of wooded area with the pool just through the window and the Koi carp… Fantastic – absolutely fantastic."

Although any form of visual splendour appeared to contribute to the memorable nature of the experience, what some interviewees were describing went beyond a straightforward appreciation of what they could see. Instead, I would argue that there was often an implicit connection between the setting that they were appreciating and the food that they were consuming – a connection between place, food, and culture. These connections are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.4. However, in relation to the present chapter, such connections could explain why fish restaurants overlooking the sea – where you are consuming food that could, in theory at least, have come from the bay you are overlooking – proved particularly memorable. The link between food and setting may also provide an insight into why interviewees appeared to be appreciating the sense of immediacy that existed between them and their food, as was the case for X14 (40s, female, housekeeper, Bath University), where her enjoyment of the food and the setting in Thailand merged into one whole experience.

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> *"My favourite thing is when you stay in a bungalow on the beach and you just get up in the morning, put your costume on and get in the sea, straightaway... You take your sarong with you and then you just go, maybe 100 yards away and sit on a balcony of a restaurant and have a lovely pancake and coffee for breakfast with fresh fruit. That's my favourite."*

Of course, X14's fruit and pancake breakfast may not have been produced locally, and therefore the connections between food and landscape that she was enjoying may have been a product of her imagination rather than a physical reality. However, physical reality is not essential for memorable experiences as long as the tourist is able to *visualise* a link between the food and the setting. In the case of the fish restaurant overlooking the sea, the fish that is being served may have been imported from another country, but there is still a synergy for the tourist between the idea of eating fish and being by the sea. Equally, X14's breakfast may or may not have been made with local fruit but, in her mind, the experience remained significant because there was something about the freshness and the exotic nature of her breakfast fruit that seemed to resonate with the fertile and colourful landscapes of Thailand that she saw around her. Thus such experiences are more memorable when holiday food and drink can act as a signifier for place, and when something about the character of the food epitomises the character of the landscape (see Chapter 6.3 and 6.5).

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4.3.2 Authenticity

It could also be argued that the powerful link between food and place is related to a desire for authenticity. This is not important in all cases because a stunning visual experience can prove memorable even when the food has no perceptible links to the landscape in question. For example, H34 (party of 2, Exmoor, smart hotel) recalled a meal eaten at a skyscraper restaurant that had splendid views all over Boston. However, the enjoyment gained from eating fish at the seafront, or from tasting wine in a vineyard surrounded by fields of vines, could also result from the fact that the experience is deemed to be more authentic because the consumer has been reconnected in some degree with the production of the food or drink that is being consumed. There is therefore support for Boniface (2003) who suggests that a renewed desire for 'traditional' food products has occurred because the contemporary consumer feels alienated from the food production process.

However, I would argue that authenticity is as much about a reconnection with culture as it is about a reconnection with place. In total, 20 per cent of the quotations relating to memorable holiday food experiences appeared to be describing what was perceived to be an 'authentic' cultural experience. X9's (40s, female, administrator, Bath University) story of her trip to a remote part of rural France provides a good example of this:

> *"We were right down on the Spanish border, and we saw an advert that the village was having an evening celebration of shepherds. So we went along and… there were all these trestle tables – the whole village was*

*there. And the shepherds were singing all these folk songs and they
cooked all this pork and omelette and they just brought it along and they
had a local liquor. And then they had goats' cheese that the shepherds
had made, and then it was announced that we all had to go around the
corner to the local rugby pitch and we had to watch a demonstration of
the sheep dogs! … Whilst we were doing all this, the shepherds were
having their supper, so they started singing again. But they'd had quite a
lot to drink whilst they were having their supper, so the nature of the
songs afterwards – and quite a lot of it was in dialect so I could only just
understand the odd word – but I knew it was pretty rude! So the songs,
after their supper, had changed tone completely! But it was just an
amazing evening, and we were the only non-French people there."*

X9's experience stands out, not because of the quality of the food, but
because she and her husband felt that they could put aside their tourist status
for a while and, through food, gain what she considered to be an exclusive
insight into the culture of that particular region of France. This encounter could
be understood in terms of MacCannell's (1989) comments about the tourist's
desire to find a way behind the 'staged authenticity' to the 'back region' so that
they feel they have uncovered something of the essence of the culture of their
destination. Contemporary commentators such as Meethan (2001) have
criticised the idea of authenticity as an objective concept by claiming that
tourists are fully aware of the staged nature of many holiday experiences.
However, my data supports Cohen's (2002) argument that we need to
consider the perceptions of the tourists themselves, because it appears that

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tourists – while often maintaining a healthy dose of scepticism as regards authenticity – still value some experiences as being more 'authentic' than others (see Chapter 2.10). Thus food and drink can act as a 'sign' for culture as well as for place, as X19's (40s, female, lecturer, Bath University) comments show:

> *"My favourite meals have probably been in France. Because you can just go into the cheapest-looking restaurant, but the quality of food is fantastic, and you never get anything duff on the menu. Everything is just – they just cook with such high quality ingredients that – and the red wine helps – it's just the way in which they eat I love."*

Here, X19 is not recounting a specific dining experience. Instead, she is commenting on what she sees as a 'typical' style of eating and cooking that she links with 'authentic' French culture. I would also argue that, in addition to offering a window onto another culture, such 'authentic' experiences may allow us to try out a different identity – that of a French person, for example – for a short period of time, as discussed in Chapter 2.5. In doing so, we are able to compare and contrast in a way that allows us to reflect on our own culture as well as that of the place we are visiting.

However, although perceived authentic cultural experiences proved memorable for the tourists described here, others did not appear overly concerned about whether a particular experience was authentic, as long as it was *different* to what they were used to, as the following section describes.

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4.3.3 'Different' foods

In total, 16 per cent of quotations relating to memorable holiday food experiences mentioned some form of difference. This supports Alain de Botton's (2002) claims that, when we are tourists in an unfamiliar environment, we notice more about our surroundings because they stand out as different from home. For example, a little girl who was interviewed as part of a family group on Exmoor[10] told me that she liked the supermarkets in France because they were "different" from those in England. Equally, two interviewees (H24 – party of 2, Exmoor, staying with friends; X28 – 50s, female, cleaner, Lancaster University) cited cruises as their most memorable food experiences because there were such a variety of different foods on offer.

However, the importance of difference may also relate to the ways in which we formulate our identities because 'difference' can provide evidence of a kind of bravado which enables people to give impressive accounts of how they have daringly tackled foods not normally consumed in the UK. As H2 (party of 5, Exmoor, average hotel) explained:

> *H2(2): We've just come back from Kenya and they had some really interesting stuff there. We ended up eating ostrich, zebra, hippopotamus… you had to try all the local delicacies. It was quite incredible, actually. Ostrich, zebra, hippopotamus… and I think there was a snake!*
>
> *H2(3): Oh my goodness!*

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[10] H29 (party of four, Exmoor, caravanning)
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On one level, this experience stood out as memorable simply because it was different from what H2 had encountered before. However, there are also links to self-identity here. Hage (1997) has argued that there is an element of competition between tourists to see who can be the most daring, and people therefore use stories of culinary adventurousness to boost their social status (Bourdieu, 1984). In the case of H2's example, there was some evidence for this because she had not known her holiday companions very long (the group had come together for a week's musical holiday). This seemed to make group members want to compete to see who could come up with the best story because, straight after she recounted her experience, another group member quickly asserted: *"I've just spent a month in Japan and I didn't eat any Western food at all for the whole month".* Although such competition may be unconscious – as Giddens (1993) noted, we may not always be aware of our desires and motivations – this illustrates the ways in which people can use their holiday food experiences to try and influence how others perceive them.

Despite this, it would be unfair to suggest that all tourists are trying to advance their social standing in this way because we may be sharing a story to empathise with others or to describe something that is interesting for the enjoyment of everyone. Alternatively, as Germann Molz (2004) has argued, our encounter with different foods and cultures may lead us to challenge our own identity and perspectives more clearly. An example of this was X21 (20s, female, administration assistant, Lancaster University), whose most memorable food experience was her recent trip to Italy. Although X21 had been abroad previously, she confessed to being a notoriously fussy eater who

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had always avoided trying different foods in favour of 'safe' options that she knew she liked. However, on her Italian trip, she found herself in a place where the only option was to eat the Italian food available in local restaurants. Initially, she found this frightening because she did not enjoy Italian food in the UK and was sure that she would not be able to find anything nice to eat. However, by forcing herself to be brave and to try the local dishes, she discovered an adventurous side to her character – and palate – that she had not seen before:

> *"I was very proud of myself for trying different foods and I think I surprised myself because I used to say 'I'm not trying that, and I'm not trying that'… and I sat there and refused to eat, and I think probably if I'd maybe tried something, I would have been alright but I wasn't willing to do that, and I think nowadays I've missed out on opportunities – I spent three years living in Bradford disliking curries, and I found one I liked – I tried them, I just didn't like them – and I found one that I liked. And it's the same with the Chinese food – I spent years and years not liking Chinese food – I kept trying and I was: 'No, I just don't like it'. There are quite a few things I like now, only through trying food. So I think Italy would stand out as the most memorable."*

For X21, the Italian trip was a revelation because she discovered that she was able to be more adventurous and, as a result, she was considering eating out more often. I would argue that, although X21 was unusual in being able to acknowledge the degree to which her self-identity had been influenced by the

difference she encountered on holiday, her experiences were not uncommon. The fact that authenticity and difference were alluded to in 20 per cent and 16 per cent of memorable experiences quotations respectively indicates that people's holiday food experiences can present a challenge to the way they perceive themselves and others. Tourist responses to, and perceptions of, difference and familiarity will be discussed further in Chapter 5. For now, however, I would argue that food experiences involving difference have the potential to be memorable because they throw our own culture and lifestyle into sharper relief.

4.3.4 Social aspects

Social aspects were also mentioned in almost 10 per cent of quotations relating to memorable experiences. For X18 (20s, male, lecturer, Lancaster University), it was not a specific meal that was important, but just a more general memory of sharing food as a *"communal experience with people you love"*. Such experiences are more likely to be memorable because humans are essentially sociable creatures. Our relationships with others are important to us and the experience of sharing food with friends and family in a relaxed holiday setting can form an evocative memory, especially given that many people have trouble finding time to eat together on a daily basis.

However, when on holiday, we are able to devote more time to eating together. In the course of sharing food, we can rebuild our relationships with others, and this is what X15 (50s, male, professor, Lancaster University) is describing when he talks of his self-catering holidays in France: *"Some of the*

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most pleasant have been these kind of meals in the evening, particularly when the kids were still relatively young, and just, you know, spending a couple of hours with them over food, but that wouldn't be any one eating experience, that would be several of those which have kind of merged together… it's the general atmosphere and just enjoying a relaxed time with people over food and drink."

X15 could not remember what had been consumed on these occasions, nor could he differentiate one event from another because the experiences had blended together. This emphasises that it was not the food itself that was important, but the opportunity for interacting with loved ones that the meal provided. It could be argued that X15's experiences were pleasurable because they involved relaxing and enjoying a slower pace of life than that experienced at home. However, although this undoubtedly contributed, X15 seemed to gain additional enjoyment from the company he was with at the time. The fact that socialising can increase the enjoyment of holiday food experiences could also explain the reverse phenomenon of why holidays – and holiday meals – can prove so frustrating if we find ourselves falling out with our companions (De Botton, 2002).

Thus whether a holiday food experience proves to be memorable is dependent on the context in which the event takes place. The contextual factors discussed here are also more powerful in combination, as evidenced by the fact that some 54 per cent of quotations cited more than one factor that had contributed to the experience – gorgeous food *and* a lovely setting; or

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eating different food in the company of friends and family, for example. However, the crucial point is that context cannot be reduced to any one of these factors or, indeed, to some predictable combination of them. Therefore, although the factors described here may increase the likelihood of an experience being memorable, we cannot guarantee that it will be so on any particular occasion.

The notion of causation and prediction has been explored at length by critical realists who argue that, just because a particular person or object has the ability to act in a certain way does not mean that we can predict if and when it will do so (Sayer, 1992). In the case of the present example, holiday food and drink have the potential to provide a memorable experience, yet whether they will do so depends upon the context in which the food and drink are consumed. This reliance on context explains why memorable holiday food experiences are elusive and unique events. It also explains why attempts to predict or create memorable experiences will always be prone to failure. An example of this is H70 (party of 5, Lake District, luxury hotel) where the group attempted to establish what it was about certain food experiences that made them memorable:

> *H70(1): One of the best meals I've ever had was when I'd just got off the plane in Italy. We went for lunch in Pisa, and it was just an ordinary restaurant – this was about eight years ago – and I had lamb – no, not lamb – liver – and that greenery stuff. And then what's that thing that's like a blancmange? Pannacotta. In most respects, it was a perfectly*

ordinary lunch, but it just was perfect. I was just about to go on holiday, I

was with people I liked; it was just wonderful.

H70(2): That combination of friends and wine and food can make a

holiday – or possibly even ruin it as well.

H70(1): Yes…

H70(3): It's places that are authentic and local. I mean, if you go to

Brittany and the dockside where it's rural and have the seafood or, as

you said, if you go to Italy... I can remember going to Turin and being

taken to a restaurant called Café Negro, and it was so authentic – it was

like 'this is defining where I am'.

RS: It adds a dimension to it?

H70(3): Absolutely.

This group identified a number of factors that can make for a memorable

experience but, despite their discussion, they were unable to find a precise

explanation because the context involved in each of these experiences was

too rich to be reducible to a list of factors. This would explain why interviewees

sometimes struggled to explain why an experience was memorable. In these

cases, they were unable to offer a precise explanation and, instead, would

attribute things to the *"atmosphere"* or *"ambience"* of an experience.

The above examples illustrate the role that holiday food *can* play. However, as

explained in Chapter 2.3, there are many instances where holiday food is

<u>un</u>memorable for a variety of reasons. These unmemorable experiences are

explored in the following section.

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4.4 Non-memorable experiences

An analysis of transcripts in Atlas Ti revealed 26 quotations referring to non-memorable holiday food experiences. *"I don't think* [of] *anything particularly"* (H23 – party of 4, Exmoor, self catering) was a typical response. However, analysing these non-memorable experiences was difficult because, for obvious reasons, tourists could not go through all their food memories to explain why they were not special. Therefore, explaining people's reactions involved reading between the lines. For example, some interviewees would state that food was an important part of the holiday, but would struggle to recall specific instances where it had played a key role. This may have been because choosing food was a largely instinctive process, with people often appearing surprised to be asked about holiday food. Some warmed to the subject quite quickly and were able to explain their feelings about it relatively easily, while others found it harder to think on their feet. As a result, I was left with the impression that, although the subject was important to them, they were having trouble finding the appropriate words to express this because they had never thought about holiday food in this way before. In such cases, the lack of a memorable experience could be said to be a result of a communication problem and not a lack of interest in food *per se*.

However, there were other interviewees for whom food was simply not an important part of the holiday. For example, H17 (party of 3, Exmoor, staying at Butlins) told me: *"Food's not really that important for us. I probably wouldn't know good food if you put it in front of me, and I certainly wouldn't recognise fancy French cuisine."* Equally, X2 (30s, male, professor, Bath University)

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commented that: *"For me, it* [food] *is just not the crucial factor – especially with the children along – it's much more, you know, if the beach isn't as nice as it looked in the picture, then that's a problem".* For these tourists, holiday food was merely fuel and, consequently, they found it hard to think of any holiday where the food or drink had been special or memorable.

It could be argued that this is to be expected, because those with an interest in food and travel will seek out the kinds of different experiences that are more likely to be memorable, while those with no passion for the subject will be satisfied with more mundane experiences. However, although H17 and X2 had not had a memorable holiday food experience before, there was no evidence to suggest that they would not do so in future because memorable experiences were not confined to those with a self-professed interest in food.

For example X6 (50s, female, administrator, Bath University) liked to take walking and camping holidays and insisted: "*I've come here to walk, not to eat".* However, when asked about memorable holiday food experiences, she recalled an Italian holiday where she had self-catered with a group staying in a monastery. She admitted that the occasion had been memorable because she had enjoyed shopping at the town market for fresh local produce and helping to cook Italian food in the spectacular grounds of the monastery. Equally, X3 (50s, female, lecturer, Bath University) said: *"I don't think food's that important to me"* and claimed not to have a memorable experience of holiday food. However, when describing a trip to visit her daughter in New Zealand, she became animated while recounting a visit to a farmers' market in Queenstown

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where the freshness of the food and the chance to chat to producers added to the experience.

I would therefore argue that <u>all</u> tourists – even those with no professed interest in food – are capable of having memorable holiday food experiences. Those with a higher level of interest may be more inclined to seek out 'special' experiences but, given the right conditions, an uninterested person may have the same experience almost by chance. The resulting occasion may even prove more memorable because food and drink do not normally form a feature of their holidays.

However, it is not only positive experiences that are memorable. I also had to understand the reverse scenario of holiday food disasters, as the following section explains.

4.5 Holiday food disasters

Cohen and Avieli (2004) have argued that, because tourists must eat while on holiday, they are dependent on the standards of food found at the destination and therefore the fear of disasters can play a major role. They suggest that this is why many people seem fearful of trying what they consider to be 'foreign' foods while abroad. During interviews, participants were asked if food and drink had ever ruined a holiday, perhaps because it had made them ill or because it had been very disappointing. While coding transcripts, I counted 49 interviewees who had had such experiences. This shows that it is not just

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positive experiences that stick in the mind – negative events can prove equally memorable.

Once again, the reasons given for such experiences were varied, and ranged from food poisoning through to bad service or the fact that the food was simply not to their taste. For example, X6's (50s, female, administrator, Bath University) boat holiday in Malawi was ruined by food, after she and her husband became very ill. *"The food was terrible in terms of the fact that we got this stomach bug which made us horribly ill – gastroenteritis – and I looked at the kitchen before that and I could see that – they baked the breads themselves – and they were just throwing it on the floor in the corner. In this situation, they provided all the ingredients and did all the cooking – therefore you had no control over the hygiene."*

However, stomach upsets were not the only problem. Sometimes food ruined things because, despite being safely edible, it did not meet the person's standards or personal tastes in cooking. This was illustrated by H71 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel), for whom my question about negative experiences came at an opportune time:

> *RS: Have you ever had a holiday where the food has really ruined it – either because it made you ill or it was just disappointing or…?*
>
> *H71(1):* [laughs] *Well, it's quite poignant that you've asked that, because we've just come here because of that.*
>
> *RS: Really?*

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H71(1): Yeah. Because we've been somewhere in Wales and checked out after one night because we couldn't eat it, and we came straight here where we know it's good.

RS: Just really bad food?

H71(1): Yes, absolutely.

H71(2): Frozen vegetables, pre-packed meat, it was absolutely –

H71(1): And it was supposed to be a nice hotel, so…

H71(2): We checked out.

However, although people's holiday food problems were varied in nature, it was interesting to note that less than half of the quotations relating to negative experiences referred to instances of outright disaster where food or drink had completely ruined the holiday. By contrast, the majority related to instances where foods or drinks had proved merely disappointing, rather than ruinous to the holiday as a whole. As X4 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University) explained:

"I've never had a whole holiday ruined but certainly an evening that wasn't as enjoyable because you're at a restaurant that, you know, it wasn't good – you made the wrong decision. I think that's really frustrating. You know, you've got limited nights in this place, you've got to make decisions, there's a lot of choice – "OK we'll go there" – and then if it's not good you're like: 'Oh no, because we could have gone there'. So it doesn't ruin it but it's a disappointment. You get over it the next day but it carries on to the next night because you think 'I've got to make a good choice', so you might do a little more research, you might work a little bit

harder – study the guide books a little bit more, ask a few more

opinions..."

Such evidence suggests that most holidaymakers who had bad experiences were able to cope with them sufficiently to ensure that they did not spoil the whole holiday. However, there was also support for Cohen and Avieli's contention that the fear of bad experiences can play a big role in the mind of the tourist. Although out-and-out disasters were relatively rare, interviewees still appeared anxious about being the victim of one. As X2 (30s, male, professor, Bath University) told me: *"I don't think it's happened. Yes, if one of us got seriously ill as a result of eating poorly cooked food then it could happen… I dread the prospect, really."*

X2's comments were echoed by eight participants who said they had *"been lucky"* because they had not been ill. *"Touch wood"* was another expression used by those who had not had a negative experience. Therefore the fear of such a disaster seemed to be worse than the likelihood of actually having one. This could be because people were underestimating their ability to cope if adverse circumstances were encountered. For example H6 (party of 4, Exmoor, staying at Butlins) had been physically sick through food poisoning, and yet the family remained adamant that this had not ruined the holiday. Instead, they were taking the day a little more slowly than normal but were still active and intent on enjoying themselves.

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This raises the question of why a negative experience should prove disastrous for one person but merely disappointing for another, and it is here that we return to the importance of expectations and context. Section 4.3 argued that a person's meals are not experienced in isolation from the rest of the holiday, so that a beautiful setting or the company of loved ones can make an average meal more enjoyable. Therefore, in relation to the present argument, a few bad meals can be redeemed as long as the rest of the holiday is enjoyable and as long as the tourist does not regard food and drink as central to their enjoyment of the experience. As described in Section 4.2, the majority of tourists had a dynamic attitude to their holiday food experiences which enabled them to expect more from the food on some occasions than others. This dynamic attitude also allows them to minimise the impact of bad experiences so that their enjoyment of the holiday as a whole is not compromised to any great extent. As H2 (party of 5, Exmoor, average hotel) explained:

> *RS: Have any of you ever had a holiday that was ruined by food – either*
>
> *because it was just disappointing or it made you ill or…?*
>
> *H2(1): I've never been ill ever with food – not abroad or anywhere.*
>
> *RS: Or something that was just really badly cooked?*
>
> *H2(1): Badly cooked maybe but…*
>
> *RS: Not spoilt your holiday?*
>
> *H2(1): No. I don't put a great deal of importance on food when I'm on*
>
> *holiday. I'm more interested in seeing the sights.*

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The exception to this is the 'gourmet' traveller, for whom food is a main purpose of the holiday, or the very unlucky person who is so incapacitated as to be unable to take part in any of the other enjoyable events of the holiday. Serious illness aside, it can be seen that, yet again, a person's expectations are crucial in determining whether an experience is considered disastrous or merely disappointing. For example, H16 (party of 3, Exmoor, bed and breakfast) admitted that many holiday meals had proved disappointing because they were bland, uninteresting and similar throughout the UK. However, for H16, this did not impact unduly upon the holiday whereas H32 (party of 4, Exmoor, smart hotel), who were self-confessed food enthusiasts, felt their holiday to Egypt had been disastrous because they could not identify any particular character to the local food and, instead, they found themselves eating *"standard global food"*. In this case, both groups had had similar experiences of bland food, but the difference in expectations between the two parties meant that H16 was only mildly disappointed, while H32 had their holiday ruined.

In summary, I would agree with Cohen and Avieli's (2004) suggestion that tourists are worried about the possibility of having their holidays ruined by food, particularly when going abroad. This is exacerbated by the fact that, like the positive experiences discussed in Section 4.3, negative experiences stay in the memory and become part of the standard that we use to judge subsequent experiences of food and drink, as represented in Figure 4 (p.144).

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However, we must be wary of having an oversimplistic view of bad experiences because this study shows that the difference between a holiday food disaster and a minor disappointment is largely one of perception and temperament. Tourists are resourceful individuals and, as a result, many are able to endure bad meals – even illness – without their holiday being ruined. In some cases, the ability to recount shocking tales of holiday food disasters can even be used to gain sympathy or respect from others in the same way as stories of adventurousness in trying 'different' foods can be used to boost one's social status (as was the case with H2's ostrich, zebra and snake, p.153). This may explain why interviewees often appeared to be enjoying describing their food disasters to me. However, there is also an extent to which bad meals are viewed as *"part of the experience"* (H62; party of 4, Lake District, staying with relatives) and, once again, this can be explained by the importance of context and expectations – the majority of tourists are able to cultivate a more dynamic attitude to food on holiday so that they do not expect too much from their experiences. In this way, other pleasant aspects of their stay can compensate for a few bad experiences with food and drink. By contrast, those with higher expectations were more likely to view disappointments as a disaster that ruined the whole holiday.

Therefore, because the ways in which people respond to negative holiday food experiences is related to their expectations, there is a clear relationship with Bourdieu's (1984) ideas about cultural capital and social status, as those with greater experience of eating out and travel, and for whom food is an important part of the holiday, will have higher expectations which will leave

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them at greater risk of disappointment. Conversely, less experienced travellers and diners will not be expecting excellent quality meals so that encounters with poor quality food will not prove so problematic.

4.6 Conclusion

The findings presented here show that tourists' involvement with food and drink is more dynamic and complex than the existing literature suggests. Long (2004a) has argued that food is an embodied experience that involves all the senses and that allows us to experience other places and cultures more fully, and the memorable experiences recounted in this chapter support that view. In this chapter I have argued that food and drink can be strongly linked to place and culture and, as a result, our culinary tourism experiences have the potential to play an important role in helping us to understand – and possibly to challenge – our understandings of ourselves and others. The fact that food and drink can engage with place and identity in this way also explains why some holiday meals prove so memorable and significant to us.

Memorable experiences are those where the unique physical and social context of the event comes together to engage with our own identities and aspirations in a powerful way. Under these circumstances, food ceases to be an isolated commodity and, instead, becomes a multi-dimensional experience linked to place, culture and identity. This, in itself, can explain why our attempts to recreate a holiday dish at home can prove so disappointing – try as we might, we can never entirely recreate the context of the original

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experience and, as a result, the connections between food and identity, and between food and place, are lost (see also Chapter 6.3, p.233).

However, in order to understand why certain experiences prove so enjoyable or disastrous, or so memorable or non-memorable, we must account for the expectations that individuals bring to the experience, because our judgements of holiday food and drink are not absolute, but relative to our expectations, as Urry (1995) described in relation to our judgements about holidays more generally. The importance of expectations can also help explain why what is merely disappointing for one person may be disastrous for another. Expectations can be related to a person's financial and cultural resources as well as to their level of interest in food (Bourdieu, 1984). For example, staff interviewees with academic jobs or current tourists interviewees who chose to stay in smart or luxury hotels, and who also had a strong interest in food were likely to have consistently high expectations of their holiday food. Such consistently high expectations paradoxically increased their risk of disappointment. At the other extreme were those with manual jobs or who chose to stay in youth hostels or holiday camps, and who also had little or no interest in food. These tourists tended to have very low expectations of their holiday food, with the result that they were almost always pleasantly surprised by the resulting experience.

However, those with consistently high – or consistently low – expectations were in the minority. Instead, I have shown that, for the majority of tourists, food and drink play a dynamic role within the holiday because expectations

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are altered in accordance with the kind of holiday that is being taken. This flexible attitude enables us to enjoy memorable holiday food experiences while also protecting us, to some degree, from encounters with bad meals, which can then be viewed as minor disappointments rather than major disasters that ruin the whole holiday. Such dynamism also shows how the majority of holidaymakers alter their expectations in the light of past experiences of holiday food and drink – both positive and negative – in a way that will impact on their judgement of future holiday meals.

Taken together, these conclusions suggest that the tourist's relationship with holiday food is dynamic in two ways. Firstly, it could be argued that our involvement with holiday food performs a regulating function on a holiday-to-holiday basis that is similar to that of a thermostat in a central heating system. In short, high expectations make disappointment more likely and disappointment, in turn, results in lower expectations and a greater likelihood that we will enjoy our next holiday food experience. This enjoyment will then lead to higher expectations and a greater risk of disappointment as the cycle begins again, thus maintaining a kind of equilibrium to our attitudes and involvement over time.

However, there is also a second kind of dynamism that operates in the longer term. This concerns the way in which repeated similar experiences can alter the basic level of expectation against which we judge our holiday food experiences. For example, we may be inclined to have low expectations of the food served in English pubs. However, if we have several UK holidays where

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we experience a high standard of pub food, we may begin to revise our expectations so that we have higher hopes of such establishments in future. The reverse can also apply: we may expect to find excellent food on holidays to France but, if we have several holidays where we experience French food to be poor quality and overpriced, we may respond by lowering our expectations for the future. However, the main point about both these forms of dynamism is that they demonstrate the resourceful and adaptable way in which the majority of tourists are able to learn from their experiences over time.

Interestingly, I did not find any systematic discrepancies between my Lake District and Exmoor respondents, or between Bath and Lancaster University interviewees, and this suggests that the factors described here are likely to be relevant to food and tourism in general, rather than the isolated feelings of those from a particular geographical area.

In the next chapter, I expand upon the issues of identity and difference that were raised in this chapter by extending the inquiry to investigate how tourists negotiate concepts of the 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary', and the 'familiar' and the 'exotic'.

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CHAPTER 5

THE DIFFERENT AND THE FAMILIAR

5.1 Introduction

Issues of difference and familiarity were key to the second research question, which asks about how the foods and drinks that tourists select on holiday compare to those chosen in the home setting. As outlined in Chapter 2.6, the ways in which people identify and respond to perceived differences between 'self' and 'other', 'exotic' and 'familiar', and 'home' and 'away' can say much about their understanding of their own identity and culture, as well as those of the people and places that they visit on holiday.

To date, much of the literature surrounding food and tourism has been based around dualisms – either/or dichotomies that point to a simple separation between self and other, home and away. For example, Warde (1997) has suggested that our food choices are based around what he terms the 'four antinomies' of novelty/tradition, convenience/care, health/indulgence and economy/extravagance, while Fischler (1988) explains that people are inclined to exhibit what he termed 'neophilic' or 'neophobic' tendencies, with the former group being happy to try what they consider to be 'new' or 'different' food and drink, and the latter preferring to stick to the safety of what is seen to be 'familiar' food and drink. In relation to tourism, a similar distinction is made by Plog (1974), who has suggested that tourists can be divided into 'allocentrics', who enjoy somewhat novel, risky experiences on holiday, and 'psychocentrics', who are more cautious and prefer to stick to what they know.

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However, the literature also acknowledges that the 'self' and the 'other', the 'familiar' and the 'exotic', and 'home' and 'away' are not static or absolute categories. Instead, such concepts are a matter of personal perception so that what is familiar and what is exotic can alter as a result of our experiences (Long, 2004b, De Botton, 2002). For example, we may consider Japan to be an 'exotic' and 'unfamiliar' place but, if we have the experience of having to work there for six months, it may become familiar to us.

This chapter tests the understandings presented in the literature by using the theme of difference and familiarity to explore how these concepts were being identified and negotiated by both tourists and food and tourism providers. The discussion begins by analysing the ways in which tourists incorporate new and different experiences into their holidays, before going on to discuss the contrary evidence which suggests that some form of familiarity – either from the home setting or from previous holidays – is equally important to them. Based on this evidence, I argue that both familiarity and difference are important components of the holiday experience, and that, as researchers, we should develop a clearer understanding of the hybridised role that these elements play. This argument is developed with a focus on the various risk-management strategies adopted by tourists. Secondly, I turn to the strategies employed by the providers in order to explore how their understandings of difference and familiarity relate to those of the tourists.

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5.2 Difference: tourists' exploration of 'new' foods and destinations

The tourist's need for some form of difference in the holiday has been well-documented in the literature (Urry, 1990, Ryan, 2002a), and my research partly supports this concern. Analysis of the interviews showed that 95 of the 107[11] tourists interviewed had made reference to the role of difference in the holiday, thus indicating that a break from routine is an important component of a vacation.

The most obvious form of difference was the desire to visit new destinations or restaurants. For example, 15 interviewees said their main reason for visiting a particular destination or restaurant was that they had not been there before. As H15 (party of 2, Exmoor, youth hostel) explained: *"We hadn't been here, so* [we thought] *let's come here!"* The decision to go somewhere new satisfies the adventurous urge that Long (2004a) has described, whereby we find it exciting to experience new places and cultures. There is also a greater element of surprise involved in visiting an unfamiliar place which, as discussed in Chapter 4.3, can sometimes result in an experience being deemed more memorable.

However, we can also experience adventurousness on holiday by trying some of the local speciality foods and drinks available in the area, which may be different from those we are used to at home. Thirty-six interviewees stated that they enjoyed trying local specialities on holiday, with the general reason being that it was 'nice to do something different'. As X7 (50s, male, credit controller, Bath University) explained about his holidays to Italy: *"When I go*

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[11] The 29 in-depth staff interviewees, plus the 78 current tourist interviewees.
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somewhere, I like to try these things – like I always try spaghetti – wherever it is in Italy, you've got to try it". As discussed in Chapter 4.3.2, the act of trying local specialities can also allow us to try out a temporary identity that enables us to better understand our own culture and identity, as well as that of the place we are visiting.

However, local specialities were not important to everyone. Thirty-one interviewees simply said that they liked eating 'different' food while on holiday, with 'different', in this case, meaning 'different from those normally consumed at home'. For example, H7 (party of 5, Exmoor, camping) explained that, when on holiday, they would be attracted to somewhere with a menu that was slightly different to that on offer in a 'typical' pub: *"If we're going to spend £45 to £55, we'd like to come away thinking 'oh, that was nice – something different that we wouldn't necessarily have prepared at home'".* The desire to try something that you would not cook at home was supported by the fact that 18 of these 31 interviewees said that they had enjoyed the variety of foods and drinks on offer within the holiday. For example X28 (50s, female, cleaner, Lancaster University) said that her favourite holiday eating experiences had occurred when she was on a cruise as a result of the range of foods and drinks available. *"They did a French night, an Italian night, an American night, an English night, a Spanish night… I collected all the menus to bring home, and it was really good."* X28 explained that she normally ate a fairly repetitive diet at home and therefore what was 'different' was the break from routine and the sheer variety of eating experiences that she encountered on the cruise.

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Other kinds of difference were related to the degree or type of eating that took place on the holiday. For example, 14 interviewees said that they had deliberately chosen food or accommodation that was more extravagant or luxurious than they were accustomed to at home. As H74 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel) explained when describing why they had chosen to stay in one of the Lake District's premier hotels: *"We live in a village in the middle of nowhere, really, but, when we do go out, we like to go to nice restaurants, nice hotels"*.

The desire for luxury on holiday might be expected to be associated with more affluent or highly educated visitors because, in theory at least, this group would have the higher levels of disposable income required to select such experiences. This, combined with a desire to distinguish themselves from their peers (Bourdieu, 1984), could explain why interviewees such as H74 preferred such experiences. However, the enjoyment of luxury was not restricted to this group, as the example of X11 (50s, female, caterer, Bath University) demonstrates.

X11 was initially reluctant to talk to me because she felt she would not be a sufficiently interesting interviewee due to her having had only two holidays in her adult life – one to Jersey for her honeymoon and, most recently, a holiday to Sidmouth in Devon. After I persuaded her that her experiences were just as valid as those of her more widely-travelled colleagues, she explained that she had chosen the Sidmouth holiday as a special treat after her employers had rewarded her with a cash prize for customer service.

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She used her prize money to stay in what she considered a very nice hotel and, on the last night, she and her husband paid to have a special dinner in the hotel's restaurant, where they really 'splashed out' on the experience. She told me she had relished every detail of the occasion, from the presentation of the food itself, to the excellent table service, candlelight and soft music, and explained that her enjoyment was enhanced by the fact that the experience was so much more luxurious than the cottage pie and sausage and mash suppers that she would typically prepare at home. A good example of this was her decision to purchase a bottle of wine to accompany the meal – something she would not normally do because of her concerns about the expense:

> *"I love a nice glass of chardonnay so, on our last evening meal, we had a bottle of nice, Australian chardonnay. It was £17.50 – a lot of money – you can get a bottle in a shop for whatever – but it was the occasion – you're talking about the occasion."*

For X11, the extravagance (for her) of the dinner became yet more special because she was not accustomed to regular holidays or restaurant food. However, a more common – if related – trend among other interviewees was the choice of a more indulgent eating style, typically characterised by the consumption of bigger, richer meals, cooked breakfasts or other 'treats', such as fish-and-chips or cream teas.

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Forty-four of the 107 interviewees stated that, when on holiday, they had indulged in foods that would normally be banned or restricted at home on the grounds that they were 'unhealthy' or 'fattening'. For example, H27 (party of 2, Exmoor, caravan) were anxious to emphasise that the fish-and-chip lunch they were enjoying was a rare holiday treat, not a regular indulgence:

> " Had we not thought of fish-and-chips, there's a pasty shop up there [points up the road], and again, this is not something that we have very often at home because it's not healthy. And these [indicating the fish-and-chips] are – you know, we're trying to keep the weight down, and then we'll go absolutely bananas and go to the Cadbury's shop and buy… things we shouldn't have – you know?"

Almost without exception, interviewees admitted feeling guilty about what they considered to be 'bad' eating habits on holiday. However, they justified their decision to indulge by emphasising that this was a 'treat' and that their holiday excesses were 'different' to the healthy diet that they tried to adhere to at home. As H29 (party of 4, Exmoor, caravan) told me with a rueful smile: "We're on holiday!"

In this respect, there is a high degree of correspondence between the role of 'difference' in the choice of holiday food, and the tourism literature, which argues that people are essentially looking for a break from routine when they go on holiday (Ryan, 2002a, Urry, 1990). Despite this, it is important to remember that what is 'different' and what is 'familiar' are not static categories (Long, 2004b). Instead, they are modified as a result of our experiences, and

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therefore what is 'novel' or 'different' at the start of the holiday can become a little too familiar as the vacation progresses. For example, X9 (40s, female, administrator, Bath University), a self-confessed lover of French cuisine, admitted that, when on holiday in France, she and her husband would have a few nights eating pizza or something simple because, in a 10-day holiday, it was necessary to take a break from three-course French meals from time to time.

The examples discussed thus far have all focused upon the enjoyment that can result from pleasurable experiences of difference within the holiday. However, for three interviewees (X19, X21 and X25) the search for difference ended in frustration when they discovered that the food and place characteristics of one destination appeared to be much the same as another. Despite having visited different destinations, these people were disappointed to find that their holiday experiences had been very similar in each place. For example, X21's remark (20s, female, administration assistant, Lancaster University) *"I've done Benidorm and it's just like Blackpool,"* showed a loss of belief in the distinctiveness of place, while X19 (40s, female, lecturer, Lancaster University) and X25 (30s, male, porter, Lancaster University) made similar comments in relation to the homogeneity of foods around the world.

The belief that foods and destinations throughout the globe are becoming more homogenous relates to arguments about the McDonaldization of society (Ritzer, 2000). Evidence presented in Chapter 6 shows that this is an oversimplification of the situation because examples from the Lake District

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and Exmoor show that there are also strong counter-trends towards local and regional distinctiveness (Boniface, 2003). However, for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note that tourists may not always be seeking complete familiarity when on holiday. Instead, they may have very little choice because what is on offer at the destination is so similar to that of the home setting. It could be argued that this is an example of the ways in which agents are constrained to some extent by the commercial structures of international tourism and the global food economy, which have resulted in similar hotel and restaurant chains springing up in resorts across the world, as well as 'exotic' foods and drinks becoming available through local supermarkets in the UK (see Chapter 7.6.1).

As outlined in Chapter 2.6, Germann Molz's study of round-the-world travellers' attitudes towards McDonald's highlights the kind of tensions that can arise when chain restaurants proliferate across the globe because of the ways in which such establishments can be perceived as comforting and familiar while also being reviled as an 'alien' intrusion that symbolises the very worst aspects of globalisation (Germann Molz, 2005). It is therefore important to recognise that perceptions of familiarity and difference can evoke a variety of conflicting emotions depending upon the personality of the traveller and the hopes and expectations that he or she has for that particular holiday experience. X19, X21 and X25 were frustrated because they hoped to experience a greater degree of difference on their holiday than they actually encountered. Familiarity was therefore unwelcome for them at that point in

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their holiday. However, for other tourists in other circumstances, safety and familiarity may be more important.

The fact that many tourists rely upon the inclusion of familiar elements from everyday life at home or from previous holidays has been largely ignored by the literature. However, the following section argues that this subject deserves equal consideration, for reasons that will now be explored.

5.3 Familiarity: the attraction of the 'safe' experience

This study shows that some kind of similarity was an equally vital component of most interviewees' vacations. In total, 79 of the 107 interviewees made reference to certain aspects of their holidays being familiar, either to their lifestyle at home or to previous holiday experiences.

The most 'extreme' form of familiarity came from 12 interviewees who were afraid of trying what they considered to be 'foreign food' and who would only choose foods from home when abroad. In doing so, they were making a statement, not just about how they defined themselves, but also about how they identified and responded to perceived differences inherent in 'the Other' (Germann Molz, 2004). Thus H1's comment: *"When I go abroad I eat beef. I don't like any of this funny foreign food. I can't stand the smell"* was a good example of the 'neophobia' described by Fischler (1988).

Therefore, for a small selection of people, difference is not exciting or appealing, but something to be feared. For these 'neophobes', it is not

sufficient to blur the boundaries between home and away by incorporating some elements of familiarity into their eating experiences because they view the distinction between the different and familiar as a clear-cut case of 'either/or', with no degrees of moderation in between. For them, a food is either familiar – in which case it is safe – or it is different, and therefore threatening. Consequently, they will look to replicate foods from the home setting as far as is practically possible to help themselves feel secure.

However, the fact that only 12 tourists felt this way indicates that severe neophobia is rare. By contrast, the majority did not seek complete familiarity but were happy to incorporate some elements of 'sameness' into their holiday experiences, for example, through repeat visits to particular destinations and restaurants.

In terms of destinations, 29 interviewees said that they liked to revisit the same places year after year. This is perhaps not surprising given that the case study areas (Lake District and Exmoor) are well known for their reliance on repeat visitors (Cumbria Tourist Board, 2004). However, although it is common knowledge that many visitors return, it is not always clear why they choose to do so. This study's findings suggest that, although family ties and financial commitments such as timeshare agreements have a role to play, the majority of repeat visitors chose to return for the simple reason that they liked the place. As H13 (party of 2, Exmoor, smart hotel) explained of Exmoor: *"It's just a favourite area for walking in particular, really. The coast path and Exmoor – we love Exmoor".*

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I would argue that the attraction of repeat visits can be linked to a desire to recapture pleasurable experiences, as described in Chapter 4.3, as well as a desire to minimise risk. In Section 5.4, I explain that visiting a familiar, much-loved destination can go a long way towards eliminating the risk of disappointment because you know what to expect and – hopefully – that you will like it. These arguments can also be applied to holiday food choices because 12 interviewees said that they liked to return to restaurants that they had enjoyed on previous occasions, or to try local specialities that they had discovered on their last visit. This shows evidence of risk minimisation at work because the person is choosing to return to somewhere that they *know* to be good, rather than risking disappointment by choosing a new food or restaurant. H48 (party of 3, Lake District, self catering) was a good example of this. The family ran a busy farm and found it hard to get away for holidays and therefore, on the occasions when they could get away, it was important to chose a holiday experience that they knew would be satisfying, as they explained:

> *H48(1): Getting time together is very difficult, so we tend to go to an area we like and, like I say, for the last six years, we've been coming back up here.*
>
> *H48(2): Well, it's stress free – we know where we're coming and we know where we're staying. We know the area so well.*
>
> *H48(1): Where we are – it's quiet – it's away from people, which is nice!*

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H48(2): No airports to contend with… If we're unlucky, we get in a traffic jam, but that's about it…

H48(1): Apart from that, we just love the area and we love the people up here and we've got… You know, with going to the same place now, we're getting to know the regulars and, of course, it's good for the kids because they all meet up once a year…

H48's holiday may not have been as exciting as if they had visited an unfamiliar destination, but this lack of excitement was compensated by the fact that they could be reasonably sure of having a happy and relaxing time. By making friends in the Lake District, their familiarity with the area also enabled them to enjoy the kind of social benefits normally reserved for permanent residents. In addition to returning to favourite destinations, interviewees were also choosing to enjoy familiar foods and drinks on holiday for a number of reasons. Firstly, self-catering visitors often found it easier and more convenient to cook familiar foods, as X24 (20s, male, library assistant, Lancaster University) explained:

RS: When you were cooking in your cabin, did you eat similar things to what you tend to do at home or…?

X24: Yeah – just quick and easy stuff. Pasta, things like that. Stir-fries and things. My girlfriend's vegetarian, so just chuck a load of stuff in the pan and get on with it, really. But mostly pasta-based because that's what we tend to eat a lot of, so…"

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This is indicative of the fact that, for many people, holidays are about relaxing and escaping from daily chores such as cooking. However, for those who cannot escape from cooking entirely, the second most preferable option is to cook things that are as easy as possible, as X24's example demonstrates.

In other cases, the need to stick to simple dishes from home was exacerbated by the limited space and facilities found in a caravan or, in the case of young families, by the need to provide food that fussy children would eat (p.199). However, the crucial point is that, once again, the loss of surprise or excitement that can result from trying different foods is compensated by the reduced stress of choosing easy, 'safe' foods that are familiar and which will be consumed by all members in the party.

Other reasons for including familiar foods or styles of eating as part of the holiday included budget limitations, health concerns and personal values, such as a commitment to vegetarianism that applies whether the individual is at home or on vacation. In relation to budget, although 14 of the 107 tourists said that they liked to spend a lot of money on extravagant experiences (p.177), 21 interviewees specifically stated that they would not do this because they did not agree with 'wasting' money on luxury experiences, or because budget limitations forced them to be more circumspect when choosing where to stay, eat and drink.

Seven interviewees – one third of those who expressed this view – had manual occupations (in the case of the staff interviews) or were staying in youth hostels or holiday camps. It could be argued that these tourists had

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fewer financial or cultural resources and they were therefore unlikely to feel comfortable visiting the 'luxury' places described earlier in the chapter (Bourdieu, 1984). However, the main consideration was that of budget restrictions, as lower levels of disposable income forced them to seek out cheaper foods and destinations. For example X28 (50s, female, cleaner, Lancaster University) preferred hotels offering half-board because she felt this was cheaper than choosing bed and breakfast establishments where you had to eat out each night.

As will be discussed in Chapter 7.6.2, price considerations are another example of the way in which tourists do not always have free choice over their destinations or holiday eating habits. However, the tendency to economise was not confined to manual workers or those staying in youth hostels or holiday camps. In addition to the 21 tourists who described spending sparingly, a further 18 interviewees felt that perceived value for money was an important part of how much they enjoyed the holiday. Unlike the 14 tourists who loved to spend on luxuries, these interviewees seemed intent on transferring their more circumspect spending patterns from home to the holiday setting by refusing to pay what they considered to be excessive prices for food and accommodation. Instead, they looked for experiences that, while not necessarily cheap, they considered good value for money. For example, X22 (60s, male, technical assistant, Lancaster University) explained that, although he enjoyed going out for meals with his family, he would not visit either fine dining restaurants or pubs serving microwaved food on the grounds that neither represented good value for money. These beliefs were also transferred to his holidays, as he described of his visit to Dorset:

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> *"We looked in* [to the window of a particular restaurant] *and it was, again, sort of five rosettes, very pretentious, fiendish prices – we looked in and thought 'you're paying all that for that? No thank you!'"*

X22 was not going to visit expensive restaurants because, in his eyes, they still offered poor value for money – regardless of whether he was on holiday. Equally, X7 (50s, male, credit controller, Bath University) explained that, when choosing hotels for his regular holidays to Italy, he invariably went for 'middle-of-the-road' establishments that were neither too cheap nor too expensive, on the grounds that these offered the best value for money.

Therefore, although a small group of tourists chose to introduce 'difference' by being extravagant with food and accommodation on holiday, it is also important to recognise an opposing trend whereby a larger group preferred to stick to the 'economy' side of Warde's (1997) economy/extravagance spectrum, either because this was all that they could afford or because being careful with money was something they did all the time, regardless of whether they were on holiday.

The same is true of Warde's health/indulgence antinomy. Although 44 tourists liked to indulge in a way that would normally be forbidden in the home setting (p.179), 17 interviewees contradicted this trend by attempting to continue their healthy eating regime from home. For example, X24 (20s, male, library assistant, Lancaster University) explained that he would be monitoring his diet

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closely on his forthcoming trip to the USA because he knew from previous experience how easy it was to put on weight over there.

> *"When I was younger, I could easily go for two weeks and put on a stone. And it's like 'I don't want to be doing that!' I'm certainly not going to be doing that this time. I've lost about four stone this year through exercising so I'm not going to be doing that."*

X24 had a strong commitment to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and, because he did not see any reason to change this when away from home, he preferred to continue with the principles of healthy eating that he was familiar with. The same was true of those whose personal values – such as a belief in vegetarianism or the importance of purchasing local food – meant that they would adhere to similar eating principles while on holiday. For example, X6 (50s, female, administrator, Bath University) told me that her strong Christian beliefs about charitable giving, combined with her experiences of being brought up after the war when many things were scarce, meant that she felt it was wrong to lavish money on eating out. This philosophy of living frugally was something that she chose to carry through to her walking holidays in Scotland where she would always self cater, as opposed to eating out.

> *"It was just a way we'd been brought up – the idea that you simply don't waste money on food, you eat out-of-date food, you don't throw food away, you'll eat the food other people would have thrown away. It was*

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partly a wartime view. I was brought up just after the war, and I think this

idea continues very much in my background."

This is another example of how our holiday food choices can reveal much about how we understand ourselves and others. By choosing to adhere to – or relax – certain principles regarding health or what we consider to be correct behaviour, we are making a statement about our own identity and the ways in which we understand the world.

The preceding discussion indicates that an understanding of food and tourism practices that is based entirely on 'the different' or entirely on 'the familiar' is inherently flawed, because the majority of tourists do not seek 100 per cent novelty or 100 per cent similarity from their holiday experiences. Instead, the interviews show that people will look to combine elements of both in a creative way that allows them to enjoy the stimulus resulting from novelty while still guarding against the risks inherent in an unknown experience. In order to illustrate how the different and the familiar work together, the following section discusses how tourists minimise risks in relation to their holiday food choices.

5.4 Coping with 'risky' holiday food

As outlined in Chapter 4.5, the fear of a bad holiday food experience plays a powerful role in the minds of many holidaymakers, and this is demonstrated by their perceptions of risk. Evidence from the interviews suggests that tourist identifications of risk are generally based upon perceived differences – either in terms of the actual foods and drinks encountered on the holiday or in terms

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of the general culinary habits and cultures practised at the destination, with tourists being anxious to avoid the risk of disappointment. As X4 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University) commented: *"The main thing about enjoying food on holiday is that… you eliminate the risk that you're not going to like it."*

Given such sentiments, it is not surprising that 55 of the 107 tourist interviewees appeared to be attempting to reduce risk in relation to their holiday food and drink. These tourists adopted a number of strategies to minimise the risk of illness or disappointment. They took certain safety procedures when abroad, from avoiding tap water or food from market stalls through to choosing buffet-style meals where a variety of foods were on offer, in preference to visiting local restaurants where the choice of dishes might prove to be narrower. However, the most common strategy, which was identified by 32 tourists, involved combating the fear induced by 'difference' through introducing some element of familiarity into their holiday. There were several ways of doing this. One strategy that proved popular among families with young children or those visiting remote places was to self-cater or to bring food from home. In doing so, it was possible to eliminate the risk that their children would not eat the 'unfamiliar' food available at the destination, or that there would be few suitable places in which to eat and shop. As X24 (20s, male, library assistant, Lancaster University) explained when describing his trip to the Highlands of Scotland: *"On the way up, we just stopped at Asda at Carlisle, because I knew there was one there – I didn't know what else there would be further North in Scotland – and just bought food there".*

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By contrast, those planning to eat out on holiday were able to introduce an element of safety into their holiday eating by repeatedly returning to familiar restaurants that they knew to be good – either within the holiday itself or from visit to visit. As discussed in Section 5.3, repeat visits prevent the excitement that comes from trying somewhere new but, for many visitors, this is compensated by the security of knowing you are going to enjoy the experience. For example, H71 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel) had returned to a particular hotel because they had greatly enjoyed the food on a previous visit: *"That's what made us come back, actually. It's always a risk going somewhere and then, you know, if the food doesn't live up to standard…"* Other, similar strategies involved choosing to eat in chain cafés or restaurants where it was felt that you could be more certain of the kind of food you were going to get. For example, X22 (60s, male, technical assistant, Lancaster University) always ate lunch in National Trust cafés when on holiday in England because he felt that the standard of food in such establishments was consistently good.

Clearly, those making a first visit to a destination were unable to revisit favourite restaurants. Instead, some would attempt to introduce familiarity through doing prior research via the Internet or guidebooks so that they would have a better idea of what to expect and which eating establishments to visit. As X5 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University) explained: *"If we know people in the area, we'll ask for recommendations, and the second thing is, yes, reference sources like The Good Pub Guide; The Good Food Guide… I can't*

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remember the last time we ever picked anywhere for dinner in the evening

that was just on spec – definitely not."

The key point is that the resourcefulness and creativity of tourists' risk management practices means that they do not have to make an either/or choice between the 'safe and familiar', and the 'adventurous and different'. Instead, this study shows that tourists can successfully combine elements of the familiar and the different in order to modify the degree of risk that they are willing to accept. For example, tourists who liked to visit the same restaurants repeatedly would often try different dishes on each visit because the fact that they knew the restaurant made them feel safer to experiment. Thus H49 (party of 2, Lake District, self catering) explained that, although they were sometimes cautious about trying different foods, they had enjoyed their visit to a buffet-style Chinese restaurant while on holiday in the Lake District because: *"You can go and pick what you want, you know? Instead of you ordering something and you get it and you're – perhaps it's alright… but you can choose so many different things that you wouldn't normally have, you know? You can try this, try that, get little plates. It's nice if you don't know Chinese food."*

In this case, the fact that there was a wide choice of different foods available meant that the couple felt safe enough to experiment – if they did not like one of the dishes selected, there was always something else. Such experiences were shared by 12 other tourists, including those who preferred buffet-style restaurants when holidaying abroad, where the dishes on offer would include a mixture of unfamiliar regional specialities as well as foods the tourists

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considered safer and more familiar. Indeed, X21 (20s, female, administration assistant, Lancaster University) whose Italian experience was described previously (p.154), explained that, because she was a 'fussy' eater, she would be more likely to be adventurous with food in a place where familiar options were also available – a fall-back in case the experiment went wrong.

5.5 Working with difference and familiarity

The evidence presented here indicates that a distinction between the 'familiar' and the 'different' is too simplistic because, from a total of 107 tourists interviewed, just eight mentioned only aspects of familiarity, while just 23 mentioned only aspects of variety on their holidays. Therefore, in contrast to the literature, the overwhelming trend identified by interviewees was not familiarity or difference but <u>hybridity</u>, where the majority (76 tourists) adopted a dynamic approach by combining familiarity and difference in innovative ways that allowed them to vary the amount of risk that they were willing to tolerate in any given situation.

This finding shows support for Warde and Martens (2000) whose work on eating out found that diners' experiences were based around elements of familiarity combined with an infinite number of small variations. For example, you return to your favourite restaurant and adhere to the same broad conventions relating to table manners and ordering procedures. However, on this occasion, you may choose to wear a new outfit, go with a different dining companion, or order a different sauce with your steak. The findings presented here suggest that tourists, too, are adaptable and resourceful individuals who

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are capable of combining elements of familiarity and difference in a variety of ways in accordance with their needs and preferences on any occasion.

I would argue that every tourist has to decide on the degree to which he or she wants to trade-off the risk inherent in a different experience, with the safety inherent in a familiar one. However, this study illustrates that this is not an either/or decision, and this is where neat distinctions between Plog's (1974) allocentric and psychocentric traveller, and Fischler's (1988) neophobic and neophilic eater, collapse for the majority of respondents. Instead, the interviewees' experiences show that we can be both, because tourists can choose to combine safe and familiar elements from the home setting – or from other holidays – with as many different and adventurous experiences as they are comfortable with. Indeed, the fact that some aspects of our holiday are familiar may actually give us a firm base from which to experiment with other, different foods or activities.

The degree to which such novel elements are incorporated in the holiday will depend partly on an individual's personality and understanding of their own identity, in addition to structural constraints, as discussed in Chapter 7. For example, some of us are inherently more psychocentric or allocentric than others and some of us – such as families with young children – may be more restricted in the degree of holiday adventurousness that we are able to incorporate. However, if we resist the urge to view the familiar and different as entirely dichotomous concepts and, instead, view them as dynamic entities that form part of a continuous spectrum, we can see that people do not have to occupy fixed positions on this spectrum. Instead, they may choose to adopt

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different positions at different times in response to changing circumstances. For example, interviewees such as X20 (30s, female, secretary, Lancaster University) explained that they liked to take different types of holiday at different times.

> *RS: When you had your caravan, did you like to go to different parts, or would you go back to the same place every year?*
> *X20: It depended, because we'd go away for weekends so we'd quite often go back to the same place on a weekend, but if we went away for longer than a weekend, then we'd go to somewhere different.*

One reason for taking several different kinds of holiday in a year is that it allows people to satisfy the desire for both the new and the familiar. As was the case with H48, the farming family who liked to visit the Lake District (p.184), it appeared that those with short or infrequent holidays were more likely to opt for a higher degree of familiarity because their vacation opportunities were limited and they wanted to be sure of having a good time. By contrast, those who were able to take more than one holiday a year often chose to make one of those holidays a 'safe' break – based around familiar foods or destinations – while the other holiday was used to allow them to experiment a bit more with different foods or destinations. For example, H54 (party of 4, Lake District, self catering) had a timeshare in the Langdale Valley, to which they returned every year. However, in between their visits, they enjoyed a variety of different holiday experiences, as they explained:

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RS: Do you generally tend to take holidays in the UK then, or abroad as well? Or a bit of a mixture?

1: [Laughs] I'm laughing because this year so far we've been to… Ecuador and the Galapagos, we've been to Italy skiing… We've been to France, we've been sailing to France – so that was two separate occasions – we've been to Italy again, to the mountains to stay with friends on a walking-type holiday –

3: We took the car to France.

1: [Nodding] We took the car to France, yes. And we're going to Croatia when we get back from here. We'll be going to Tenerife in October, so when you say 'When do you take holidays?' it kind of – well, we're retired, so we go away a lot.

Despite this, the entirely familiar and the entirely different holiday were rare. For example, the repeat caravan holiday to Exmoor which appears, in essence, very similar to life at home, is almost certain to have some small element of difference, even if this is only the deliberate decision to indulge in a few forbidden treats from home. Equally, the holiday that appears almost entirely adventurous is likely to have some familiar aspects from the home setting. For example, H1 (party of 3, Exmoor, staying at Butlins) had to incorporate some familiar foods from the UK while on safari in South Africa because one of their party had a strong dislike of what he considered to be 'foreign food' (p.182).

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5.6. Moving through the spectrum

The evidence presented here shows that we must move away from dichotomies such as home/away, or the familiar/different because, in reality, holidays rarely involve 100 per cent novelty or 100 per cent familiarity. As a result, I have argued that our understanding of people's holiday behaviour should be based upon more fluid concepts, such as hybridity and dynamism, which are capable of accounting for the variety of ways in which tourists incorporate elements of familiarity and novelty in their holidays. Such flexibility enables tourists to take different kinds of holidays at different times in order to meet their changing needs, and it is here that the idea of a spectrum is helpful. If we theorise the familiar and different as dynamic concepts that form part of a continuous spectrum, we can develop a more thorough analysis of the ways in which tourists successfully negotiate the tension that exists between the excitement resulting from a new experience, and the safety inherent in a familiar one.

Any attempts to assign people to fixed positions – that of the always adventurous eater or the always cautious holidaymaker, for example – will thus be inherently flawed because many people will move fluidly throughout the spectrum of behaviours as their mood and circumstances dictate. However, the interviews also suggest that some visitors appear to move more freely throughout the spectrum than others. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, as discussed in the preceding sections on difference and familiarity, an individual's tastes, beliefs and values may make them more or less willing to experiment with food. The importance of these factors should

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not be underestimated as X21 (20s, female, administration assistant, Lancaster University) explained, when describing her anxiety at the 'different' foods she encountered in Italy (Chapter 5.3.3). However, the interviews also indicate that decisions regarding holiday food may sometimes be the result of necessity rather than choice, as particular social, cultural and economic factors appeared to make it easier for some people to move more freely throughout the difference and familiarity spectrum than others.

For example, a person's family circumstances appeared important when decisions about holiday food were being made. As discussed in Chapter 7.6.3, interviews showed that the typical family holiday tended to be chosen, first and foremost, to meet the needs of children (p.330). This generally involved choosing 'safe', easily accessible and affordable destinations, such as the Lake District and Exmoor, where there were plenty of facilities for children. In relation to food, parents also attached a high degree of importance to selecting child-friendly, affordable restaurants where they knew that there would be familiar foods available for the children to eat. Thus for practical and financial reasons, the presence of children can place a constraint on the degree of difference and adventurousness that is possible in a holiday, as H11 (party of 4, Exmoor, self catering) explained. The couple had been describing an enjoyable holiday that they had spent in New York, which involved a lot of sightseeing and eating out, and this led them to reflect on how their holidays had changed since they had had children:

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H11(2): Also we were unencumbered by X [indicates their son] *so we were a bit more free to do what we… We ate out in the evening then, didn't we?*

RS: Does that change things?

H11(1): It does. It changes the experience. Because, to be honest, there are so many places that you can't go, and it's difficult to go out in the evening because, after seven o'clock, he shuts down!

H11(2): So we've brought lots of books to read, because you can't really do all that much in the evening, just because he runs out of energy after half seven, eight.

This is not to say that families are never adventurous with foods or destinations. X1, for example, had taken her young children to Portugal, Turkey and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while H5, an 11 year-old girl who was accompanying her grandparents on holiday to Exmoor, explained that she liked going abroad because it gave her the chance to try different foods. However, such examples were the exception rather than the rule.

There was also evidence that economic factors could have an impact upon the ease with which a person was able to move throughout the difference and familiarity spectrum. For example, interviewees with lower incomes sometimes preferred to take all-inclusive package holidays to the Mediterranean for financial reasons. As X25 (30s, male, porter, Lancaster University) explained:

"I think that those sort of holidays work out quite well because they're a lot cheaper – because my wages aren't brilliant – and you can eat as much as you want for your breakfast. If you're feeling a bit peckish around dinner time,

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you can always get something from the shops, but when you come back in the evening, it's the same again, you can eat as much as you want and you're quite content until the following morning." However, X25 also stated that, to his disappointment, the hotels and food that he had encountered throughout the Mediterranean were generally fairly English in character. This indicates that visitors on lower incomes may find it harder to make more 'adventurous' food choices: by choosing more economical holidays, they may be restricted to safe and familiar foods and resorts, whether they like this or not. By contrast, those with higher incomes may have the financial resources required to be able to go to different places or to eat out at different restaurants every night – thus maximising their opportunities to visit 'exotic' destinations or try different foods. A good example was H32 (party of 4, Exmoor, smart hotel), a group who described themselves as being 'foodies' who preferred to eat out in a variety of restaurants at night.

> *H32(1): It was nice to have the opportunity of going down to a few fish restaurants and Rick Stein's… Our holidays tend to be quite centred around food.*
>
> *H32(2): We were talking about this today – we probably wouldn't have gone to a place like Padstow had it not been for the seafood restaurant there. And we like to eat good food.*
>
> *RS: So you research it quite a lot before you go somewhere?*
>
> *H32(2): Yeah – and we tend to use the Michelin Guide as a guide to where we go. And we stay in places where we know we can get good food.*

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H32(3): Yeah, well you came to Padstow last year because of Rick Stein – to try his restaurant.

H32(1): Yes. I mean last year we booked our Cornwall hotels and holidays around the Michelin Guide – looking at where the…

RS: Looking at where you're going to eat?

H32(1): Yes, basically.

H32(2): And we do the same thing when we go to France. We tend to book our hotels and our restaurants based on the Michelin Guide or where we want to stay and eat so we're foodies first, I think!

In addition to having sufficient funds to enable them to overcome structural constraints of income, H32 could also be looking to distinguish themselves through visiting renowned restaurants in the area, as suggested by Bourdieu (1984).

Therefore the analysis presented here shows that Plog's (1974) theory that holiday behaviour spans the full spectrum between allocentrism and psychocentrism is correct: in relation to both food and destination, people's choices range from the almost entirely safe and familiar, to the almost entirely new and adventurous. However, contrary to Plog (1974) and Fischler (1988), this study shows that holidaymakers do not occupy static positions on the allocentrism/psychocentrism or the neophilic/neophobic spectra because tourists are resourceful, adaptable individuals who are capable of moving throughout the spectra and taking different kinds of holidays at different times.

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However, it appears that some interviewees may move more freely throughout the familiar/different spectrum than others. In addition to taste and personal preference, the degree to which they do this may be affected by structural factors such as age, income and family status. These can act as enabling or constraining influences that will affect the ease with which a visitor can select a particular kind of holiday food experience. For example, tourists with lower incomes may not be as free to experiment with holiday foods as a result of limitations on what they can afford, while those with young families may also be constrained by the need to cater for the demands of children. By contrast, visitors with greater financial resources or those unencumbered by the presence of children may find it easier to make more adventurous choices.

The impact of structural factors will be discussed further in Chapter 7. However, the final part of the chapter completes the present discussion by turning to the providers in order to explore how their understandings of the familiar and the different compare to those of the tourists.

5.7 Provider understandings of the familiar and the different

In order to investigate how the foods and drinks that people selected on holiday compared to those chosen at home, I also had to explore food and tourism providers' understandings of familiarity and difference. This is because, as discussed in Chapter 7.6, tourists do not have complete freedom of choice when selecting their holiday foods and drinks. Unless they are going to bring foods and drinks from home, they will be able to choose only from those on offer at their destination. Consequently, the local food producers, café and restaurant owners and food and tourism managers working in that

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place will play an influential role in determining what products are available. Therefore it was imperative to supplement the research conducted with the tourists with an exploration of the ways in which food and tourism providers understood – and acted upon – concepts of difference and familiarity. The following section begins by discussing provider understandings of difference.

5.8 Difference: the need for distinction in the market place

Just as tourists claimed to be looking for 'something different' in relation to their holiday food, the most common view expressed by providers was that too much similarity was bad for business. The implication is that, if too many people do the same thing, there will not be enough customers for everyone to succeed, unless the size of the market happens to be growing very rapidly. Therefore, from a total of 57 providers[12], 21 said that it was essential to be different in order to stand out from one's competitors, while 23 providers described their product or service as being different in some way from other, similar products and services. As will be discussed in Chapter 7.5, being able to compete effectively is particularly important for businesses reliant on tourism because, although the visitor market may be large enough to support everyone in the summer, many businesses struggle in winter when tourist numbers are low. For example, R8's business (40s, male, Italian restaurant owner, Exmoor) started as a tearoom but, after struggling to compete with the other tearooms in his village, he decided to transform his business into a pizza and pasta restaurant. In doing so, he was able to differentiate himself in the market and build up his own, distinct, customer base. R8 was convinced that

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[12] *i.e* the 24 café and restaurant owners, 17 food producers and 16 food and tourism experts.
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his success was due to his business being different and was adamant that it was essential for all businesses to distinguish themselves in this way: *"You have to evolve – you can't stand still. Every single season you have to do something different because other people are doing something different and other places are opening up. And you've just got to keep one step ahead all the time."* Equally, R13 (40s, male, upmarket café owner, Lake District) felt that he had been able to stay ahead because his café offered consumers that all-important element of difference that was not available elsewhere. *"It's being individual that can make a difference to a site where there's a lot of competition. You've got to be individual and you've got to give something that they cannot get elsewhere, and that's what we've tried to achieve."*

The importance of creating distinction in the marketplace shows that Bourdieu's (1984) arguments can apply to businesses as well as to individuals. With incomes from large-scale agriculture and food production falling, a popular strategy has been to diversify into making high-quality local products which are often sold, initially at least, through alternative outlets such as farmers' markets and small-scale, local eateries, thus enabling providers to get a better price for their product (Boniface, 2003). Key to the success of this strategy is the assumption that a sufficient number of consumers will want to distinguish themselves by purchasing something that is slightly different from the conventional products on offer at the supermarket and, consequently, the new product is marketed as a niche item, retailing at a premium price. Therefore, for food producers in an increasingly competitive market, it could be argued that too much similarity to other producers is counterproductive.

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Interviewees also expressed concerns that, if local producers did not make a conscious effort to remain distinctive from their competitors, they could saturate the market and damage profits throughout the local food sector. For example, P1 (30s, female, small bakery owner, Lake District) was concerned that too many local food producers were making the same products and attempting to sell them in too many places, thus leading to a loss of the very exclusivity that they had originally aimed for.

"I look at people whose products I know, and you go into Costcutter and it's there, and you go into Asda and it's there, and you think 'how can it be that special if it's everywhere?' And I think… in the last two or three years, there's been a great expansion [of local food producers], *because everybody thinks 'oh, we can all make some money out of this'… people get excited and think 'this is great', but let's hope that it doesn't spoil the Cumbrian food industry as a whole, because it's everywhere – every little coffee shop has got pots of jam and boxes of biscuits. And, if you're going out and you've only got £10 to spend that day, once you've spent it, you've spent it, you're not going to go out and buy some more, are you?"*

However, although many providers were conscious of the need to be different, there was also disagreement about the degree to which genuine distinctiveness was possible, with 10 providers doubting whether genuine variety of product was possible in an increasingly global marketplace. As P4 (50s, male, fruit-juice producer, Lake District) explained: *"You can get nearly everything throughout Britain now. We are becoming a bit homogenised,*

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aren't we, with our shops and our food? And I'm jolly sure that, if I go into the middle of London, I can buy Cumberland sausage." Such concerns support the comments made earlier in the chapter by the tourists who felt that many destinations – and many foods – were essentially the same in character as a result of the development of the global tourism industry (p.180).

At the heart of the problem is the fact that familiarity and difference are not static categories. Instead, they will change in the light of people's experiences. Therefore, if a product or service is successful and consumer demand is high, the tendency is for the original provider to expand production and for other providers to seek to capitalise on an expanding market by developing a similar product or service. This problem was experienced by R8 (40s, male, Italian restaurant owner, Exmoor) who, as described previously, decided to transform his tearoom into an Italian restaurant after struggling to compete with the other tearooms in his village. Thus what was once exclusive and different becomes commonplace and familiar, and it becomes harder for the producer to charge a premium. It could therefore be argued that the economic structures of supply and demand act to create opportunities for providers who can come up with small but innovative changes that will enable them to re-launch their product as 'exclusive' or 'different' in some way. These structures will also act to constrain providers who do not generate new ideas because their products will become too similar to the others available on the market.

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However, although some providers felt that it was hard to be different, there appeared to be a definite link between producer and consumer distinction, as P4's (50s, male, fruit-juice producer, Lake District) comments show:

RS: Do you think local food would become less attractive if everyone did it? Or if it was sold in –

P4: Yeah, it would lose a little bit of its exclusivity, wouldn't it? I mean, the fact that it is a little bit more expensive – I can't remember the name of it now, but there's a beer that's 'reassuringly expensive' – they're actually making an advertising ploy out of this… So, presumably, the people that buy it can feel good as they walk around with the tins, letting the world know that they can afford it.

This view was particularly prominent among food producers and restaurateurs operating at the higher end of the market, who were very concerned with building the right image for their product and carving out a niche for themselves. I would argue that it is essential for these businesses to distinguish themselves in this way because the customers they are looking to attract tend to be those with greater financial and cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1984), who are also attempting to distinguish themselves from others through their eating-out and shopping habits. These customers therefore require the foods that they buy, and the restaurants that they eat in, to display equally good taste and an element of exclusivity.

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However, this move towards distinction was not the only process operating. I also discovered an opposing trend at the other end of the economic spectrum, whereby owners of pubs, cafés and fast food restaurants that were operating within a lower price bracket were aiming to make themselves similar to their competitors. This indicates that familiarity is important for providers as well as consumers, as I shall now discuss.

5.9 Familiarity: providing safety for consumers

For businesses aiming to compete on price in a bid to attract higher volumes of tourists, familiarity appeared highly important. For example, R19 (30s, male, fish-and-chip shop owner, Exmoor) had decided to stick to a simple menu that was favoured by fish-and-chip shops throughout the country. *"We tend to stick to the basic things that you would find in a fish-and-chip shop – you know, pies, pasties, burgers, sausages – things like that. The way I look at it really, I'd rather do 10 things really well than 20 things 80 per cent well… My best-selling thing is fish-and-chips, at the end of the day. And when people come in and have a takeaway or they sit down, 90 per cent of people have fish-and-chips."*

R24 (40s, male, 'standard' pub landlord, Lake District) also explained that there were certain 'pub favourites' such as lasagne, chilli and steak that he had to keep on the menu simply because *"it's what people expect"*, while R14 (50s, female, inexpensive café owner, Exmoor) liked to stick to a limited menu of specials that were popular with her customers. This propensity for familiarity was driven by a number of factors. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 7,

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interviewees stated that it was much easier to run a business based around a restricted number of popular ingredients because this resulted in simpler ordering and management procedures. It was also possible to benefit from reduced price ingredients through the economies of scale that occur when ordering large quantities of a single product. However, the overwhelming reason given was a belief that tourists demanded familiarity as E9 (40s, male, regional food group expert, Exmoor) explained:

> *"There are those who would stay in a holiday camp who would probably look for their nearest burger place – in which case, it wouldn't matter to them where that beef came from. It could come from Argentina for all they care. What they are recognising is the taste associated with that product, in the same way that we all buy Heinz tomato sauce because it doesn't matter if it's bought down here or somewhere on the other side of the world – the taste is going to be the same because it's associated with the brand. Now it's the same with Burger King and McDonalds… You know what you're getting, and that's what they particularly like."*

As a result of this belief, pubs and cafés that were targeting themselves at the mass market were wary of trying anything too different in case they repelled the consumer who was looking for the safety of familiar favourites. This was acting as a constraint upon several café and restaurant owners who explained that, although they wanted to offer a more innovative menu, they had to retain 'familiar' dishes that would be popular with more 'neophobic' customers. As, R7 (40s, male, upmarket restaurant owner, Lake District) described:

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You're very restricted – you've got to have a steak on your menu – you know, whether that be a sirloin, rib-eye, fillet – and you've got to offer a chicken dish… So when you take into account that you've got to have your lamb, you've got to have your beef, you've got to have your chicken, you've got to have your vegetarian – that's four options – it leaves you two or three more options for fish."

Given the importance of familiarity to many businesses, it could be argued that fears of market saturation, as expressed by P1 (p.206), were well founded. However, this is not the case because this study shows that tourists are not necessarily looking for a totally different experience. Instead, it is *small-scale* variations that they value. The first part of the chapter showed that tourists want a degree of familiarity <u>and</u> difference, and the interviews with providers also show that this is what the majority are setting out to achieve, as the following section explains.

5.10 Hybridity and dynamism: the adaptable provider

This research shows that most food businesses are not aiming to be entirely familiar, or entirely different, when compared with other food businesses, just as most tourists do not want complete familiarity or complete difference. Indeed, of the 41 food producers and café, pub and restaurant owners interviewed, 29 implied that they had created businesses that were broadly similar to those of their competitors, but which also displayed small but significant elements of difference. This can be understood as the provider

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equivalent of the tourists' risk-management strategy as described in Section 5.4.

By creatively combining similarity and difference, these providers were able to offer consumers the security that comes from familiarity, as well as the element of novelty that is important in the tourist experience. Often these changes were made in small increments – a less risky option for providers than making several dramatic changes at once. For example, P2 (40s, male, large bakery owner, Lake District) kept developing small variations on products for his bakery in order to keep things slightly different, while also acknowledging that these would never replace the traditional favourites that were loved by many customers: *"We're always looking to come up with new recipes and something different, and there's not a lot that's brand new in the baking industry. It's coming up with a different presentation on it. But we also have our fruit cake recipe that has been passed down a lot of times – both the recipe and the way it is made – and we wouldn't be rushing to change that."*

Equally, R11 (40s, female, tearoom owner, Lake District) had chosen to stick to a traditional menu for her tearoom, because she felt that this was what her customers wanted. However, she was also able to offer them an element of difference because the tearoom was on a working farm and the ingredients were locally or organically produced: *"What's different here is the quality of it – the eggs are from the hens that people can see in the field – they're organic. The cheese is made from our own milk – they can watch the cows being*

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milked and then taste the products coming from that milk – we have our own

milk in the tearooms."

The distinctive elements described by P2 and R11 are not revolutionary. However, both show that it is possible to combine broad elements of familiarity with small elements of difference in order to attract tourists. By making these subtle variations, providers can avoid direct competition with their rivals because, if marketed effectively, they can create a niche for their particular product or service by appealing to a specific market segment. E6 (30s, male, regional food group expert, Lake District) was optimistic about the future for the local food sector in Cumbria because he felt that such subtle nuances between providers enabled them to segment consumer markets more effectively. This meant that the sector was attracting a much wider range of people than if all providers were doing the same thing:

> *"Obviously you've got people doing speciality foods like air-cured bacon*
> *and prosciutto and things like that – OK, that's one end of the market, but*
> *then if you're talking about a pork chop, that's the other end of the*
> *market… the whole thing's at different levels, really. So you've got a*
> *whole lot of people doing speciality foods and then, at the other end,*
> *you've got people doing the basics but doing well because they've got*
> *good local connections."*

However, because difference and familiarity are largely a matter of perception, I found that branding and marketing skills also had a major role to play. For

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example, businesses operating at the top end of the market would frequently claim to be very innovative and different to their competitors, as R4 (40s, female, upmarket restaurant owner, Lake District) told me: *"I keep it fresh. I mean, I'm changing it almost daily, if not weekly, if not monthly… I'm forever sourcing new products and looking at new ideas".* Equally, R2 (20s, male, traditional country-house hotel, marketing manager, Lake District) said of the chefs working in his hotel's prestigious restaurant: *"*[name] *and* [name] *are both very innovative in what they do. They would never, ever, copy a trend. They… create the trends. I mean,* [name of dish]*, for example, was created in this restaurant. So this is a very new place where trends come out of rather than* [name] *and* [name] *following trends."*

However, although both R4 and R2's establishments did stand out from their competitors by doing things differently, I would argue that, in terms of what was actually <u>done</u> in both places, these differences were not as great as the above quotations would suggest. For example, an analysis of their menus revealed that, although dishes would often be given distinctive names or lavish descriptions, such as 'Cranberry Bambi' or 'Lamb Rumpy Pumpy' in the case of R4, or 'Cinnamon and apple crumble parfait served with caramelised apples' in the case of R2, these essentially represented small yet innovative twists on popular British favourites, such as venison, lamb hotpot or apple crumble.

Instead, I would argue that both businesses had discovered the secret of successful marketing so that relatively minor differences – varied menus,

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locally sourced ingredients and imaginative dishes – were emphasised in order to attract tourists for whom distinction and difference were important components of the holiday. Indeed, several providers were explicit about the importance of good marketing. They felt that it was the responsibility of the business owner to 'create' difference in a way that would be appreciated by the consumer. As R4 (40s, female, upmarket restaurant owner, Lake District) explained: *"If I gave you a plate there, you'd be eating and we'd be chatting and then, if I said to you 'that's actually Aberdeen Angus beef that you're eating', then you'd say 'gosh, it's absolutely delicious' and you'd think about it. But if I said to you 'it's from Asda', you'd think 'oh…'* [she pulls a face]. *It's psychological… And it's training people – you know, a little piece of cheese is Cumberland farmhouse, it's produced by* [name] *from* [dairy name]*, and she makes it because her daughter had an allergy to this, that and the other, and that's why she started – it's really interesting."*

Therefore the implication is that the tourist needs help to recognise these subtle points of difference that are important in creating the novelty he or she requires as part of the holiday experience. In this way, a successful business will be one that can provide enough familiar elements of the dining experience to enable a tourist to feel safe, while also incorporating a marketing strategy that emphasises small but significant points of difference, such as locally-sourced ingredients or a stunning rural view from the tearoom window. In this way, the tourist can enjoy the safety of the familiar while also enjoying the 'different' aspects of the experience which, in some cases, may enable individuals to distinguish themselves from others (Bourdieu, 1984).

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The ability to market small-scale variations successfully may also enable providers to deal with the problem of market saturation. As explained previously (p.207), there is a danger that flooding the market with a plethora of similar products and services will damage business by preventing providers from charging a premium for what was once an 'exclusive' product. However, I would argue that more astute providers can come up with small variations which, if marketed correctly, can enable their product to be perceived as 'distinctive' and worthy of a premium once again. The success of this strategy also depends on the presence of consumers willing to pay these premiums. Earlier in the chapter, I argued that some holidaymakers are more inclined to look for extravagant, indulgent products as a contrast from everyday life when on holiday, and this may help providers wishing to charge premium prices for their products. Consumers may also be more willing to pay a premium if they believe a product has some form of place distinctiveness, as described in Chapter 6.

5.11 Summary

Like the tourists, providers have a dynamic and hybridised attitude towards familiarity and difference. The majority want to present themselves as different in some ways from their competitors and, the higher the price bracket that they are aiming for, the more important it is to appear distinctive and exclusive, in order to allow customers to distinguish themselves from others, as Bourdieu (1984) explained. However, this is a delicate balance to strike because, the higher the price, the harder it is to find a big market while still

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maintaining an acceptable level of difference. Therefore, the degree of variety incorporated is generally fairly small because providers recognise that many tourists also need some basic elements of familiarity if they are to feel safe. Thus providers, like the tourists, face a trade-off between a desire to appear different – and therefore more attractive and exclusive to those wanting distinction – and the need to retain some kind of familiarity so that customers are not intimidated by something too novel.

The skill lies in a producer's ability to use subtle variations – and astute marketing skills – to make something appear different, while actually keeping many things the same, so that the consumer has some frame of reference through which to interpret the experience. Indeed, the ability to create and market these small variations can enable providers to work effectively with the economic structures of supply and demand so that their product is able to retain its distinctiveness and stay ahead of the market.

5.12 Conclusion

Concepts of familiarity and difference are vital to this study's second research question which asks: 'How do the foods and drinks selected on holiday compare to those of the home setting?' In order to understand the choices people make, I have argued that it is essential to understand how both tourists and food and tourism providers understand these concepts. The reason for this lies in the relationship that exists between structure and agency. As explored in Chapter 7.6, tourists' food and drink choices are influenced, not just by personal preference, but also by certain structural constraints,

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including the question of what products and services are made physically available at their destination by the food and tourism providers who work there. As a result, it was essential to develop an additional understanding of how difference and familiarity were understood and operationalised by the providers as well as the tourists.

This chapter has shown that there is a broad correspondence between the views of the tourists and those of the food producers, café/restaurant owners and the food and tourism experts. Essentially, this is because these providers showed the same, hybridised attitude towards familiarity and difference as the tourists did. I have argued that it is unhelpful to categorise tourists as either allocentric or psychocentric (Plog, 1974), or as neophobic or neophilic (Fischler, 1988) because, in reality, most tourists are looking to incorporate both familiarity *and* difference into their holiday eating practices. The same is also true of the providers: the *entirely* different, or the *entirely* familiar business is rare, just as the tourist seeking complete similarity or complete novelty is rare.

With regard to novelty and difference, I have argued that people's financial and cultural resources also have a role to play, with Bourdieu-style distinction (1984) proving important for tourists and providers alike. In terms of tourist behaviour, those with greater financial and cultural resources are particularly eager to distinguish themselves from their peers via their food consumption choices. Their desire to do so also has an impact upon local food producers and café and restaurant owners, because the presence of a body of tourists

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who are willing to pay for such distinction encourages market segmentation whereby producers can develop niche products and services for which they can charge a premium. Thus the relationship between tourists and providers is a reciprocal one – tourists' choices may be constrained or enabled by the products and services made available by providers, but the providers themselves will also be constrained or enabled by what their customers demand and are willing to pay for.

The main contrast between the two is that, in the case of the tourist, the motive for seeking difference is a social and cultural one whereas, in the case of the provider, the motive is primarily commercial. As outlined in this chapter, providers face the threat of market saturation and, consequently, the majority will be eager to ensure that their product or service remains different – albeit in a small way – from that of their competitors. However, in order to remain distinctive, they must also be able to adapt and change over time because, for both tourists and providers, difference and familiarity are dynamic concepts – what is new and different now may not be so in a year's time, and both providers and tourists must adapt their behaviour accordingly.

Despite the importance of difference, familiarity also has a role to play for tourists and providers alike. In some cases, familiarity appears inevitable for both groups as economic structures encourage the reproduction of successful products and services across the globe, leading to some destinations becoming increasingly homogenous. For the tourist seeking difference, or for the producer wanting to maintain distinctiveness of product, such a strong

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degree of homogeneity is unwelcome. However, I have shown that, in the majority of cases, some level of familiarity is important for tourists and providers because it implies a certain degree of safety. For tourists, this means choosing tried and tested foods and destinations that they know they will like. For the providers, this means providing a 'safe' product and service that will appeal to even the most cautious of customers.

Consequently, for both tourists and providers, familiarity and difference should not be seen as mutually exclusive, opposing categories. Instead, we must remember that these concepts are, firstly, dynamic and, secondly, that both form part of a continuous spectrum on which tourists and providers can locate themselves. By moving towards a more hybrid understanding of difference and familiarity, we are able to see how tourists and providers creatively combine both elements in their behaviour. For example, tourists strategically alter the degrees of difference and familiarity involved in their holiday eating in order to manage the amount of risk that they are willing to tolerate on a given occasion. The provider equivalent of this behaviour is the effective use of branding and marketing initiatives, whereby small changes to the business can be emphasised – or sometimes downplayed – in order to make them seem more or less significant to customers.

However, although difference and familiarity are important to both parties, tourists and providers differ in terms of their ability to use these concepts flexibly. For example, contrary to Plog (1974), I have shown that tourists cannot be assigned to static positions on the different/familiar spectrum

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because interviewees were able to shift positions by taking different kinds of holiday at different times, in response to changing needs and circumstances. Despite this, evidence from interviews revealed that holidaymakers differed in the extent of their movement throughout the spectrum. I argued that structural factors relating to a person's social or cultural attributes – such as age, income or family status – could have an influence on these differences by acting to enable or constrain the decisions made by tourists. However, similar arguments could also be made for the providers because, although many showed a desire to innovate, their ability to creatively incorporate difference and familiarity could potentially be influenced by structural factors, such as political legislation or the large commitments of time and capital required for major change. In summary, for both tourists and providers, decisions may sometimes be the result of necessity rather than choice, as discussed in Chapter 7.

The following chapter builds on this discussion of difference and familiarity by looking at the role that locality and 'authenticity' can have in creating a sense of distinction for food products in tourism destinations.

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CHAPTER 6

FOOD, PLACE AND AUTHENTICITY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 showed that some degree of difference – in addition to some element of familiarity – is an important component of holiday consumption practices for most tourists. It also argued that one way of introducing difference into our holidays is by choosing to sample local foods or drinks that might be considered 'typical' of the area being visited. This is supported by the fact that, of the 107 tourists interviewed for this study, 69 reported having consumed something that they felt was 'local' – either because they considered it to be a speciality product of the region or because it emphasised ingredients that had been locally grown or produced. Such a statistic implies that, in the mind of the tourist, food has a potentially powerful connection with place.

This chapter addresses issues of place-specificity and authenticity in relation to food and tourism by tackling the study's third research question, which asks: 'What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks?' To answer this question, the analysis draws upon the literatures relating to Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) and authenticity within tourism (See Chapter 2.9 and 2.10). Although both literatures are distinctive in their own right, there is scope for overlap between them, as the increasing demand for local food can be interpreted as a desire for more authenticity within the food chain (Boniface, 2003). Local food, for example, is often viewed as

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'authentic' on account of its having strong links to the places and people that produced it, in contrast to what are sometimes considered to be the 'placeless', overly processed and packaged offerings of the 'conventional' agricultural sector (Bell and Valentine, 1997, Boniface, 2003, Ilbery *et al.*, 2005). Local food is also said to be relevant to tourism because foods and drinks can come to symbolise place and culture (Bessière, 1998, Urry, 1990).

This chapter argues that local food plays an essential part in the tourist experience by enabling visitors to explore place and culture more thoroughly. It begins by explaining why foods and drinks are popular as souvenirs, before going on to explore, through interviewees' experiences and menu analysis, how tourists and providers use locality to enhance the perceived authenticity of food products. This discussion leads to an argument for a revised understanding of authenticity in relation to food, while the final section of the chapter challenges the extent to which local food can be considered to be socially constructed. However, any attempt to understand the relationship between food and place must first consider the question of what local food is, as the following section describes.

6.2 What is local?

When conducting this study, I did not adhere to any particular definition of 'local' because, instead of imposing a strict definition on my respondents, I wanted to analyse how different actors were using the term, and for what purposes. The results revealed extensive debate about the meaning of 'local

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food' in accordance with the conclusions of previous research (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001, Working Group on Local Food, 2003).

Tourists, for example, frequently associated local food with particular speciality products, such as cream teas and cider on Exmoor, and Cumberland sausage and Grasmere Gingerbread in the Lake District. Of the 36 Exmoor tourists interviewed, 32 were able to give examples of foods and drinks that they associated with the area, with a similar trend being observed in the Lake District, where 38 of the 42 tourists interviewed identified at least one food or drink product with the area. Figures 19 and 20 show how both destinations were conceptualised through food and, although there is some overlap (meat, cheese and beer appear on both graphs), it is clear that both regions have distinct food identities, with cream teas, pasties, fudge and cider being seen as characteristic products for Exmoor, and Cumberland sausage, Kendal Mint Cake and Grasmere Gingerbread performing this role for the Lake District. Although the Lake District seems to have a slightly better-developed food identity than Exmoor, with a wider range of products being identified, the key point is that, from a visitor standpoint at least, both regions are associated with a relatively small number of iconic products.

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Figure 5. Local specialities identified by visitors to the Lake District
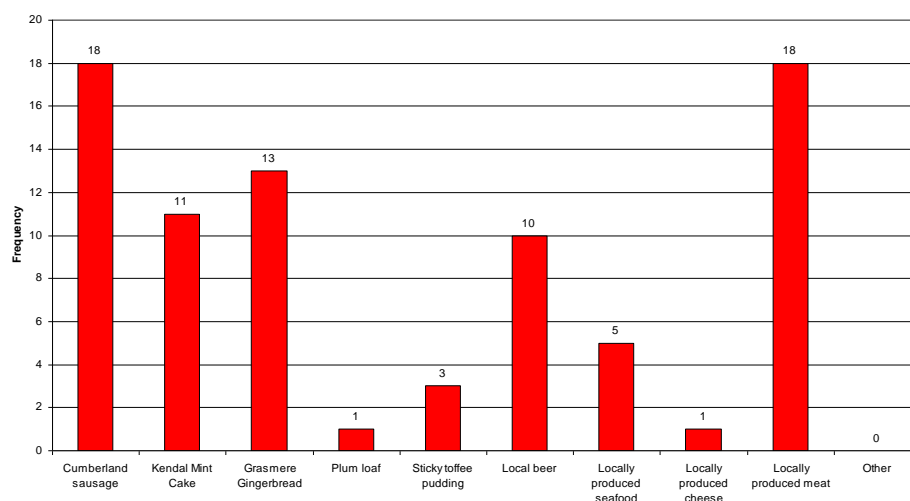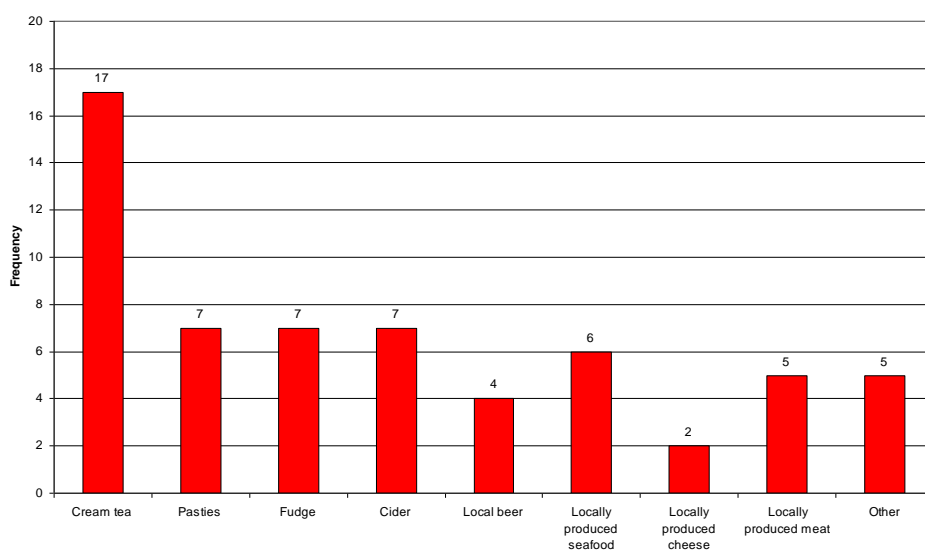

Figure 6. Local specialities identified by visitors to Exmoor

However, interviews with food and tourism providers[13] revealed very different understandings of what 'local' food might be. For example, 10 of the 57 providers favoured a geographical definition, where 'local' referred to products from within a defined area. There was, however, considerable disagreement

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[13] Defined as the 24 café, pub and restaurant owners, 17 food producers and 16 food and tourism experts.

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over the extent of this area. In the case of the Lake District, P2 (40s, male, large bakery owner, Lake District) felt that 'local' should mean products from Cumbria, whereas P5 (40s, male, meat producer, Lake District) thought the definition should extend to products from the North West. Similar disagreements occurred among the Exmoor interviewees, with P12 (40s, female, cheese producer, Exmoor) defining local as the Quantocks and Exmoor, while R1 (30s, male, country-house-hotel chef and manager, Exmoor) considered Devon, Somerset and Exmoor to be 'local'.

There was also debate about what should happen to a product within the region, due to disagreement about the relative importance of local ingredients and local manufacture. Interviews with providers revealed that a spectrum was operating, which ranged from strong definitions of locality based upon the use of local ingredients at one end, to weaker definitions based upon local manufacture or the use of local supply companies at the other. For example, P7 (30s, male, jam producer, Lake District) felt that the concept of 'local' would be too limiting if it could be applied only to local ingredients. He felt that his company should be considered local because, by manufacturing locally and employing local people, he was helping the Cumbrian economy.

> *RS: What do you think constitutes local food, if you were to have to say what – ?*
>
> *P7: Well, I always get quoted the thing about adding value to the product, which I think is a very good way, because you couldn't possibly make*

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apricot chutney in Cumbria and call it local. Because where's the nearest apricot trees?

RS: Quite a long way away.

P7: [Nodding agreement] *Quite a long way away. So if you went along the lines of saying it's got to be reared or grown locally and then produced locally… you're limiting yourself. We couldn't make chilli jam. Even red onion marmalade – the onions aren't produced within Cumbria, and you would not have a farmer within Cumbria producing onions, because the lie of the land's not exactly conducive to… So, especially on ours, you can't have anything that you can say is really local, local.*

However, other producers, such as P15 (30s, female, jam producer, Exmoor), argued for a stronger definition of locality. P15 made her preserves by personally handpicking local fruit, before peeling and chopping all the ingredients in her kitchen. As a result, she was angered by rival Exmoor producers who used pre-prepared, frozen fruits from abroad to make their 'local' jam.

"This is my biggest bugbear of all time. You can make a product locally, so it's called local. There is a fruit preserve maker who has stamped all the way across them 'local, local, local, local, local'. But their whortleberry jam, the fruit comes from America… personally I think that's mis-selling, because everybody thinks they are eating Exmoor whortleberries and they're not… An awful lot of product comes from abroad and yet,

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P = Interviews with food producers

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because they are processed here, it's called a local product. And, in my view, that isn't a local product. It's a local product if it's grown here".

P11 (40s, male, cider producer, Exmoor) went even further to argue that the product should also be a 'traditional' one that people would associate with the area – such as cider, clotted cream or fudge. This diversity of opinion illustrates how the concept of local can be socially constructed in a variety of ways according to a person's beliefs and circumstances. Indeed, the examples given here show that, perhaps unsurprisingly, people tend to adopt the definition of local that best justifies their business strategy. Thus P11's definition of local as involving locally grown ingredients and an element of tradition would exclude companies such as P9's handmade chocolate production business on the grounds that chocolate is not a traditional product for Exmoor, and because the cocoa and sugar involved are not locally-grown ingredients.

Further evidence that 'local' was being constructed in different ways for different purposes came from the fact that an individual's personal beliefs about what was local sometimes had to be compromised for practical reasons, as was the case with R18 (40s, female, visitor attraction café owner, Lake District). R18 explained that, although Cumbria was the ideal choice when specifying local ingredients, the definition had to be stretched in order to obtain a sufficient volume and variety of produce because *"if you're just using from Cumbria – which is all very nice – then your choice selection narrows".*

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However, official definitions of locality were equally pragmatic and varied as much as lay definitions. For example, E11 (40s, male, food policy maker, central government) explained that Defra had been forced to distinguish between 'local' and 'regional' food because European laws relating to state aid meant that governments were not allowed to give financial assistance to products simply because they were local. Instead, there had to be some distinctive quality dimension to the product in question (Defra, 2002).

The fact that everyone, from tourists to government experts, was employing different definitions shows that locality was being constructed by different actors for a number of purposes. As Harvey *et al.* (2004) have argued, this process inevitably involves power relations because, as the preceding examples show, each definition empowers and includes some actors while excluding others. In relation to the present study, the main point to emphasise is that, although tourists and providers may talk about 'local food' as if it were a straightforward concept, this is far from being the case. Taylor (2001 p.8) has claimed that *"there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it",* and the same is true of local food. It is therefore vital to remember that definitions of 'local' vary greatly, and that every use of the term is based upon certain values and assumptions.

Despite conflicts over meaning, the concept of local food remained a powerful one due to the perceived relationship between food and place. The remainder of the chapter illustrates the importance of this relationship by analysing how food and place were conceptualised and used by tourists and providers alike.

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The first example discussed will be the purchase of food and drink souvenirs by tourists.

6.3 Food and drink as souvenirs

The purchase of souvenirs shows how place and – more importantly – our memories of being in that place, can be transferred through food and drink products because of the way in which such products can come to symbolise place. Of the 107 tourists interviewed, over 50 per cent said that they had bought, or were definitely planning to buy, food and drink souvenirs of their holiday, with less than 10 per cent saying that they were not interested in doing so. The souvenir purchasers varied in their levels of enthusiasm, from H54 (party of 4, Lake District, self catering), a frequent visitor to the Lake District who rarely bought souvenirs, but who had, on this occasion, decided to bring back a box of Kendal Mint Cake for office colleagues; to H22 (party of 2, Exmoor, smart hotel) who had spent £60 on specialist tea and coffee by a renowned local tea merchant in addition to *"the usual stuff like fudge"*. As repeat visitors, both H54 and H22 had a clear idea of what food products they felt would make good mementos of the area. However, even for first time visitors, ideas about the food identity of certain regions would frequently precede the holiday itself, as the example of H35 (party of 1, Exmoor, smart hotel) showed:

> *RS: Will you take back any food or drink as souvenirs, at all, do you think?*

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H35: Oh yes! I've heard fudge is quite a good thing to take back, and I'm hoping to get something in the Scrumpy cider line for my neighbour who is doing little jobs – you know, gardening.

Chapter 4.2 showed that it is vital to consider people's prior expectations when attempting to understand the role that food plays in the holiday experience (Urry, 1995). However, this process is particularly important when explaining the purchase of food souvenirs because, as H35's example shows, our preconceptions may include some expectations of what the foods and drinks of the destination will be like so that, prior to arrival, food is already viewed as a sign of place. Urry (1990) and Wang (1999) have argued that tourists look for 'typical' signs of place that accord with their own perceptions and stereotypes, and I would argue that foods and drinks are good examples of these signs. As a result, we are likely to want to try these 'typical' products during our holiday because there is a sense that, if you want to be a 'good' tourist, you must engage with these regional specialities. As H11 (party of 4, Exmoor, self catering) explained: *"we've been informed that we have to buy fudge".*

However, such prior impressions of certain foods being related to place can be reinforced or broadened as a result of the actual eating and drinking experiences we have on holiday, so that we begin to include other products that we may not have previously considered. For example, in addition to taking home what she considered more 'typical' souvenirs of wine and olives, X1 (30s, female, lecturer, Bath University) brought back sardine paste and

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sausages from her family's holiday to Portugal, simply because these were the kinds of products that were served to her on a regular basis while she was there. Therefore, X1's prior expectations of food and place were broadened to include new products as a result of the physical experience of eating particular foods in the holiday setting. In this way, the connections between food and place cease to be merely the result of preconceived ideas and become more real to the tourist, because certain foods now have a personal memory of place attached to them.

I would argue that it is this ability to bring back happy memories of what it felt like to be in that place that makes food and drink such effective souvenirs. Unlike other popular souvenirs, such as a decorative key-ring or craft item, foods and drinks engage all the senses and have stronger connections with place because we have personal, sensory memories of consuming them in that setting. This ability of food to evoke memories and emotions was described by R4 (40s, female, upmarket restaurant owner, Lake District), who also owned a delicatessen that stocked many of the ingredients used in her restaurant. R4 felt that her delicatessen served an important function by allowing customers to take home ingredients that they had enjoyed during their meal.

> *"I think food evokes a memory... You know, you eat something, not just because it feels good, but because it evokes that memory of the good time – whether it's the Cornish pasty or a cream tea, or a Cumberland sausage*

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– and it doesn't matter where in the world you eat it. The time when you first ate it is what the memory relates back to, and it's very unifying."

Further evidence for the link between food and memories of place came from interviewees' attempts to recreate holiday eating practices at home. Twelve of the 107 tourist interviewees had tried to do this, ranging from X9 (40s, female, administrator, Bath University), a regular visitor to France whose love of French cooking on holiday led her to frequent a particular French restaurant at home, to X1 (30s, female, lecturer, Bath University), who liked to pick up recipes from different holiday destinations that would then become part of her eating at home. However, of the 12 interviewees who had attempted to recreate holiday food experiences, five confessed to being disappointed with the result, as X21 described:

X21: I tried to recreate the pasta – not the actual pasta, but the pasta dish with the cherry tomatoes and the courgette. It was alright but it was like 'I'm not getting this right'. Obviously it was fresh pasta over there.
RS: Did you have any kind of recipe?
X21: No, I made that up, because it was just some veggies in a tomato sauce and that was about it… I'd been in Sainsburys or whatever, and I'd been on the fresh pasta aisle and it was 'oh – spinach and ricotta!'… So I thought 'oh, I'm going to get some of that'. And it wasn't as nice. I must admit I was a little bit disappointed because… over there it was so delicious…

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X21's pasta may have disappointed because it was a physically less tasty, budget version of the dish she had in Italy. However, I would argue that, even if the product itself had been an exact replica – as many people's souvenirs are – it would remain unsatisfying on a deeper level because of the disparity between the holiday place memories associated with the original consumption of that product and the everyday context in which it is consumed at home. In short, food and drink souvenirs can be disappointing precisely because they are so good at evoking memories of place.

Wang (1999) has argued that holidays can enable tourists to experience feelings of 'existential authenticity' because of the way in which they free us from the constraints of everyday living and – of particular relevance to the present study – because they allow us to enjoy sensual pleasures, like rich foods and drinks, that are often restricted when we are not on holiday (p.179). As a result, it could be argued that certain holiday foods become associated, not just with 'having a nice time', but with the deeper feelings of existential authenticity that we experienced while consuming them in that particular place. When we try to recreate holiday foods at home, therefore, we are attempting to replicate, not just particular taste sensations, but the feelings of existential authenticity that we experienced when we consumed those foods on holiday. Such attempts will inevitably fail because, as described in Chapter 4.3, although foods can be recreated exactly, the precise context – and therefore the feelings originally associated with their consumption – cannot. Consequently, while it may be fun to recapture the different tastes that we have experienced on holiday, the place memories associated with the foods

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may make us more aware of the fact that we are no longer enjoying being in that place or experiencing the feelings of existential authenticity that we had there.

Despite such disappointments, local food remains a popular souvenir as a result of its ability to symbolise place and culture. These links between food and place become more apparent when we analyse what kinds of food experience tourists are seeking when on holiday. The following section investigates tourists' holiday food preferences in more detail and argues that the majority of visitors want to engage with foods that they perceive to be 'local' and 'authentic', in order to help them gain a better understanding of the place and culture of their destination.

6.4 Food and authenticity

Local food is not only valuable as a souvenir of a holiday. The fact that over 60 per cent of interviewees had deliberately chosen to consume foods or drinks that they considered 'local' while on holiday (p.222) suggests that, rather than just looking for something 'different', tourists are seeking products that they feel will give them an insight into the nature of a place and its people. As X23 (30s, female, secretary, Lancaster University) explained: *"I think you need to try the local food because it's part of the culture really, isn't it?"* Her comments were echoed by H63 (party of 5, Lake District, smart hotel) who said: *"You want to try the local food wherever you are, and get a taste of the place".*

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I would argue that this desire for 'genuine' food experiences can be understood as part of a search for some form of authenticity on holiday. Like local food, authenticity is a highly contested concept (Wang, 1999, Taylor, 2001, Yeoman *et al.*, 2006). However, although academics disagree about what is meant by authenticity and question the extent to which such experiences are possible or desirable, the idea of authenticity remains important for tourists (Cohen, 2002, Yeoman *et al.*, 2006). Such conclusions are supported by the findings of this study. For example, H70 (party of 5, Lake District, luxury hotel) described an Italian meal that was enjoyable precisely because he felt it was authentic:

> *"It's places that are authentic and local. I mean, if you go to Brittany and the dockside where it's rural and have the seafood or, as you said, if you go to Italy... I can remember going to Turin and being taken to a restaurant called Café Negro, and it was so authentic – it was like 'this is defining where I am'."*

His example shows that, for tourists, local food is about more than geographical proximity. Instead, it is about the search for foods that appear to say something about the place and culture that created them. However, the key question is why it is that some holiday food experiences come to be seen as 'authentic' events that represent place and culture while others do not. To understand why this is so, I would argue that we must look at the ways in which food and place relationships are constructed by tourists and food and tourism providers alike. As discussed in Chapter 2.10, contemporary debates within tourism have moved away from the idea of authenticity as an objective

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concept towards an understanding of authenticity as a social construct, and this study partially supports these developments. For example, tourists may have their own ideas about what a 'typical' food experience of that place might look like, and anything that fits this image is more likely to be identified as 'authentic', as H56's story shows:

> *"One meal in Italy just sticks in my mind. In Siena – it was just down a little back street on a Sunday, and it was packed with local people. It had gingham cloths – it was just kind of homely, but <u>you felt like that was proper Italian"</u>* [emphasis mine] H56 (party of 2, Lake District, day visitors).

Although H56 was enjoying the food at the café, her enjoyment was about more than just the taste of the dishes in front of her. Of much greater importance was the fact that the whole eating experience – including the setting, the ambience and the food itself – seemed to resonate with her ideas about what was characteristic of Italy. In short, she was consuming, not just pasta and pizza, but what she felt to be the nature of Italy itself.

Further analysis revealed that 'authentic' experiences could prove just as valuable during holidays within the UK. For example, I asked H67 (party of 2, Lake District, smart hotel), what kind of place they would look for if they wanted to stop for lunch while out touring around the Lake District, and they explained that they would prefer something that appeared traditional and English: *"It's either got a charm to it, or it's got a sort of look that's authentic. Not the fast-food type place – that's not us. It's got to be authentic and 'olde*

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tea shoppy' for me". Similar arguments were made by H75 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel), who explained: *"We tend to avoid loud and plastic! You know, I think if we're going to eat, we'd rather be in a cosy little real-ale pub that looks like it is home cooking, you know? Rather than something that's been zapped in a microwave".*

H75's comments reflect concerns about food quality, on the grounds that home-cooked food should be tastier than its microwaved equivalent. However, the choice of a 'cosy little real-ale pub' above anything 'loud and plastic' also indicates a desire for a more authentic, traditional eating experience. Such examples support McIntosh and Prentice (1999) who argue that, by seeking experiences considered historical or traditional, we are actually trying to gain a better understanding of our own cultural identity. Thus holiday food and drink experiences not only help us to explore different cultures – they can also enable us to experience our own identity more strongly.

The preceding examples illustrate three ways in which the tourist socially constructs authentic relationships between food and place. Firstly, an occasion is more likely to be considered authentic if it corresponds with our preconceptions about what a typical food experience for that place will look like. Thus H56's experience of the café in Siena was memorable because it reflected her ideas of what Italian culture was like. A second – and related – factor is that a food experience can seem more authentic if it takes place in a sympathetic surrounding environment. As discussed in Chapter 4.3, an eating experience is about more than just the food that is being consumed.

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Ambience, physical setting and the characteristics of our fellow diners all have a role to play in creating an experience, and if these factors, as well as the food itself, appear 'typical' of that place, the experience has a greater chance of being considered authentic. This may explain why H67 and H75's descriptions of an 'authentic' English eating experience (p.237-238) focused more on their surroundings than they did on the food. Finally, authentic experiences tend to emphasise some element of tradition or naturalness. For example, Yeoman (2006) has argued that tourist attractions must not appear too contemporary or manufactured because 'authentic' implies origins in the distant past – the idea that a certain activity has been going on in a certain place for generations thus adds a sense of legitimacy to an experience. In relation to the experiences described here, this is reflected in H70's description of the 'rural' dockside in Brittany, in H56's enjoyment of the 'homely' feel of the café with its gingham tablecloths and in H67 and H75's preference for *'olde worlde'* charm over anything modern.

Interviews with food and tourism providers show that these same three factors are used to sell particular food products and destinations to the visitor. This is achieved by promoting relationships between food and place and by attempting to emphasise the authenticity of these relationships, as the following section explains.

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6.5 Authenticity as constructed by providers

In the first instance, providers in both the Lake District and Exmoor showed a good awareness of the kinds of products and food experiences that tourists might expect to find in these locations, as R13's comments show:

"Your Cumberland sausage scenario is a stamp for the Lake District – it's like sticky toffee pudding – if you visit the Lake District, you've got certain products that people automatically come up here and – it's like when you go down to Cornwall somewhere, you expect Cornish pasties and clotted cream" R13 (40s, male, upmarket café owner, Lake District).

R13's thoughts were echoed by P11 (40s, male, cider producer, Exmoor), whose cider was sold through supermarkets throughout the UK, as well as direct from his cider farm near Taunton. However, although his national marketing approach was based upon trying to promote the premium, single-variety ciders that were fashionable with contemporary consumers, he explained that tourists visiting his farm were invariably more attracted by Scrumpy, because this was the kind of traditional product that they expected to find in the West Country.

"Nationally, it's sold as 'farmhouse draught' or 'draught cider' – locally people come here and they'll say 'we want to buy Scrumpy'. Because that's what they hear up in the North – they say 'oh, you've got to go to Somerset to buy Scrumpy'… From a local customer point of view, there are certain things they would want to see in a cider… it's a bit like clotted

cream. People don't really buy clotted cream up in the North, but it's associated with the South West so they'll look for that sort of product."

P11's cider business also benefited from a sympathetic surrounding environment, because visitors to his farm could walk in the orchards where the apples were grown and take a tour of the old cider press to see how the products were made. However, P1 (30s, female, small bakery owner, Lake District) had made further attempts to create a synergistic setting for her customers when she took over the running of the business from her parents. Her bakery sold a popular local speciality product with well-known historic origins and she wanted the shop to make use of this history by taking on a Victorian theme:

> *"In the old business, the staff didn't have a uniform, so they were coming in with high-heeled shoes on and, you know, the wrong attire – we had girls with lots of jewellery on and stuff like that. So we thought 'yes, we're going to have a uniform', and so obviously I themed that on Victorian, I themed it on our corporate colours and spent a great expense and a great amount of energy and time on sorting patterns to match in with this Victorian theme."*

Although the use of Victorian costume is an example of the kind of 'staged authenticity' described by MacCannell (1989), having a themed setting that ties in with the history of the bakery clearly helps promote the product's image as a speciality that has genuine links with local place and culture.

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The use of a Victorian theme is also relevant to the third strategy of constructing authenticity through a focus on tradition and naturalness. When talking about what made their products unique, 10 of the 17 producers interviewed emphasised that their product was 'natural', with 10 also choosing to focus on the product's 'handmade' qualities and eight highlighting 'traditional' aspects of the product. For example, P6 (50s, female, cheese producer, Lake District) used minimal packaging because she wanted to emphasise the naturalness of her cheese, while P7 (30s, male, jam producer, Lake District) felt that his jam was special because it was handmade, in contrast to what he considered to be "mass produced" products from factories: *"It's not just saying 'well, it's locally made' – it is locally made, but it's made in a small pan and not in a big factory. Because, if you're in the middle of Birmingham, and there's a chutney factory next door, well that's locally made, but it's mass produced locally made."*

For producers, therefore, local products were constructed as authentic by emphasising their natural, traditional and handmade qualities, all of which helps strengthen the perceived links between product, place and culture. This also provides support for Taylor (2001) because, as the preceding examples show, attempts to define authenticity are also attempts to create distinction for certain products. Indeed, promoting a product as 'authentic' only makes sense in opposition to the perceived inauthenticity and uniformity of everyday life – the 'mass-produced' factory chutney, for example, or the 'overly packaged' cheese found in supermarkets, which does not relate as strongly to place or

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culture. By emphasising how their products differ from such 'inauthentic' everyday equivalents, producers can boost the image of their product.

Equally, Harvey (2004) has argued that conflicts between different actors in the food chain are caused by conflicts over what constitutes quality in a food product. While supermarkets and large producers operating in conventional supply chains define quality as consistency of supply, uniformity of product, and low prices, producers operating in the alternative sector choose to focus on superior taste, handmade methods and a concern for the environment. However, the examples presented here show that authenticity should be added to this list because of the way in which perceived authenticity is used as a further facet of quality for small producers.

It is also important to note the reciprocal nature of the relationship between place image and food image. This chapter shows how certain products act as a marker for place, as R13 (40s, male, upmarket café owner, Lake District) noted when explaining that Cumberland sausage was a 'rubber stamp' for the Lake District. These products can then be used to brand the region and boost the image of a destination, as E4's comments on Cumbria's 'Taste District' food campaign show:

> "We do have fish-and-chips and McDonalds and KFC, but… that doesn't give us a unique feel that the consumer can latch on to, whereas we have a fantastic calendar of farmers' markets, we have food events, we have a great plethora of award-winning regional food producers – products that

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are synonymous with the Lake District, like Kendal Mint Cake and sausages" E4 (30s, male, tourist board representative, Lake District).

However, just as 'signature' products can confer distinction on place, so the image of place can also create distinction for the products that originate from it. For example, R7 (40s, male, smart restaurant owner, Lake District) felt that the image of the Lake District as a clean, fresh place associated with wholesome outdoor activities was reflected in the quality of the products that tourists expected to see when they holidayed there, while E10 (30s, female, regional food group representative, Exmoor) felt that similar arguments applied to the South West. She contrasted the area's fresh, clean image with the imagery associated with the Midlands and explained that the South West's perceived characteristics made it easier to market products from the region.

> *"I think the South West has a – if you're talking to people in the South East, they'll see it as a very clean, green area. And therefore, if you're buying meat from Dartmoor, they would think it was very good. So there is this image. But my Mum is up in the Midlands – right in between Coventry and Birmingham – and it's fantastic meat but it would be much harder to promote it, really."*

This link between place image and food image implies that place-focussed marketing strategies are more likely to be effective in some locations than others. The examples presented here show how food and tourism providers seek to 'sell' products by emphasising the links that exist between food and

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place, and this tactic works well for the Lake District and Exmoor because both have a clean, green image associated with them. However, E10's comments imply that, in regions without this wholesome, natural image – such as the Midlands or the London area, for example – place-based marketing strategies may not prove as effective. For example, if we eat a piece of cheese that we know was made on a farm near Keswick, we may enjoy it all the more because we are, at least in part, consuming the green, rural image associated with that place. However, if we eat a piece of cheese produced on a farm near the M25, we may feel that it is not as pure or natural because it was produced in a place associated with urban sprawl and pollution. Therefore producers in less idyllic locations may have to stress other dimensions of quality, such as the traditional processes or organic standards by which the product was produced (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005, Marsden, 2004) in order to compensate for this negative image of place. Further research would be required to confirm this (p.373). However, in the context of the current study, the crucial point to emphasise is that the relationship between product image and place image works both ways. Astute food producers can therefore use place image to sell food, while tourism providers can use food image to sell place.

The 80 menus collected for the study provide further evidence of this by assessing the degree to which food is promoted through an emphasis on the links between food and place. The following section shows that place-based strategies are an important, though not exclusive, means of promoting distinctiveness for café and restaurant owners.
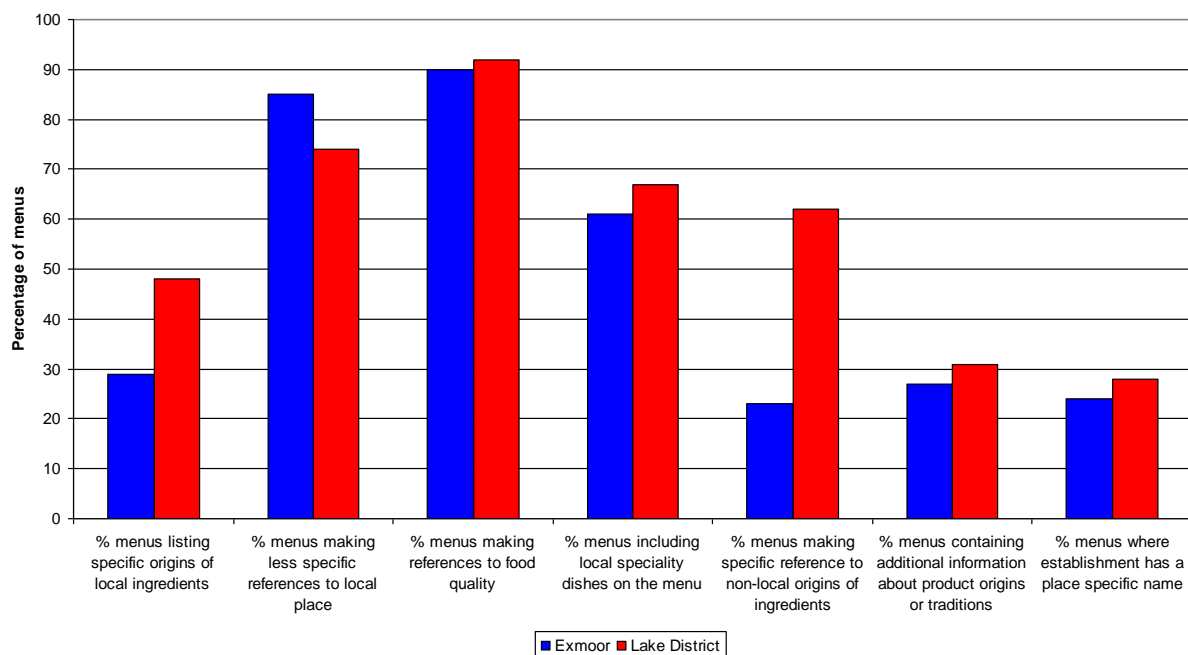
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6.6 Putting place on the menu

As outlined in Chapter 3.9, 41 menus were collected from cafés, pubs and restaurants on Exmoor and 39 from the Lake District. These menus were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in an attempt to discover how food was being marketed. The results of this process are shown in Figures 21-22 and in Tables 12-15. Figure 7 gives an overview of the ways in which food was promoted on menus in the Lake District and Exmoor, while Table 6 gives examples of the kinds of words and phrases represented by each category.

Figure 7. Strategies for promoting food in the Lake District and Exmoor

Table 6. Examples of words used for categories in Figure 7

Category description	Examples of words used
Menus listing specific origins of local ingredients	"Lyn Valley salmon", "Waberthwaite air-dried ham", "Ullswater trout"
Menus making less specific references to local place	"local beef", "farmhouse cheese", "Exmoor lamb", "traditional scone"
Menus making references to food quality	"prime gammon steak", "homemade cake", "fresh bread", "organic egg"
Menus including local speciality dishes on the menu	"Grasmere Gingerbread", "Cumberland sausage", "cream tea", "fudge"
Menus making specific reference to non-local origins of ingredients	"Wiltshire ham", "Scottish salmon", "French brandy", "Italian biscotti"
Menus containing additional information about product origins or traditions	"All meals are prepared and cooked on the premises using fresh produce sourced locally wherever possible"
Establishments with a place-specific name	The Wordsworth Hotel, Dunster Lunchbox, Whortleberry Tea Room

The menus support the arguments presented in this chapter by showing that an emphasis on locality, naturalness and tradition is used to make food products appear more authentic and distinctive. For example, the most popular strategy used by both regions was an emphasis on food quality as exemplified by terms such as "fresh", "homemade" or "organic", which were found on 90 per cent of the Exmoor menus and 92 per cent of Lake District menus. This was closely followed by a place-based strategy involving the use of less specific references to local place, such as "Exmoor", "Lakeland" or "local", which was employed by 85 and 74 per cent of Exmoor and Lake District establishments respectively. However, the inclusion of local specialities was also a popular tactic employed by 61 per cent of Exmoor menus and 67 per cent of Lake District menus. Although there are clear similarities between the Lake District and Exmoor, the Lake District can be seen to have higher percentages in all but one of the listed categories, thus indicating that the region has a slightly stronger food marketing strategy. The

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differences between the regions are most pronounced when it comes to being explicit about the specific origins of local and non-local ingredients, as will be discussed more extensively on p.250.

Several conclusions can be drawn from Figure 7. Firstly, as outlined previously, an important component of authenticity is a sense of naturalness or tradition, and the high percentage of establishments promoting food quality through terms such as "fresh" and "homemade" is a further indication of this. Such terms may not be directly related to locality, but place cannot be considered unimportant because of the ways in which the image of the study areas as green and pleasant lands can be transferred to the food products produced there through the use of terms like "fresh" and "homemade" on menus – both of which imply that food production is small-scale and traditional in scope. The importance of place is also confirmed by the second most popular strategy which was based upon the use of less specific references to locality or tradition – for example "Lakeland lamb", "farmhouse Cheddar" or "locally-caught trout".

Figure 7 confirms that less specific references to local place are more prevalent than specific references to the origins of local ingredients. There are several possible reasons for this. It could be that restaurateurs are unable to be more specific because they use more than one local producer to supply a particular ingredient throughout the year[14]. Alternatively, restaurateurs may not be sufficiently aware of the benefits that could result from being more

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[14] See Chapter 7.2.2 about the difficulty of obtaining a consistent supply of ingredients.

Codes used:
X = In-depth interviews with university staff   E = Interviews with food and tourism experts
H = Current tourist interviews   R = Interviews with café and restaurant owners
P = Interviews with food producers

specific about ingredient sourcing. The importance of making sure that local food was branded and labelled correctly on menus was a big issue for local food experts such as E2 (40s, female, food journalist, Lake District) and E9 (40s, male, regional food group representative, South West). They emphasised that local sourcing gave businesses a real opportunity to distinguish themselves from their rivals, and complained that many cafés and restaurants were not making the most of these benefits because they were not being sufficiently specific on their menus, as E9 described.

> *E9: There are only a few* [businesses] *who are genuinely communicating that properly with their customers – in other words, it's on their menus properly. Not just saying: 'This is a nice piece of West Country beef', but 'This beef has come from down the farm and the story behind it is that Joe Bloggs has produced it and they've only used this' etc.*
> *R: So being quite specific about it?*
> *E9:* [Nodding agreement] *Being quite specific about it. But there are only a few that do that. The majority still say 'all our food is sourced locally'. Well, that's not quite good enough, really.*

This implies that, although some benefit can be gained from labelling a product as "local" or "Exmoor", true place distinction can result only from stating precisely where a particular product has come from. The ability to be specific can also help strengthen the links between food and place because the consumer has the story of a particular place and producer to engage with. Crucially, he or she will also be reassured that there is some integrity behind

the term "local" because clear evidence is given to support the claim. As argued previously, the definition of 'local food' is highly contested (p.223). Producers, consumers and restaurateurs will all have their own ideas about what the concept means to them, and it is possible that, by choosing to list ingredients in a non-specific way, some restaurateurs are attempting to benefit from widespread consumer enthusiasm for the idea of local food while also avoiding conflicts associated with its definition. For example, when a product is listed only as 'local', we can have no way of knowing exactly where it comes from (*i.e.* how local is local?), how it was made, or who it was made by – all factors that are important in helping us decide what we are willing to accept as a 'genuine' local product. If a restaurateur lists the specific origins of certain ingredients on the menu, customers may be encouraged to formulate their own judgements on the matter. By contrast, if he or she employs less specific descriptions, the customer can enjoy the good feelings inherent in the idea of 'local', without having to assess the meaning of the concept.

Figure 7 also suggests that the Lake District has a slightly more developed food marketing strategy than Exmoor, particularly when it comes to giving specific information about the origins of local and non-local ingredients. For example, 48 per cent of Lake District menus listed specific origins for certain local ingredients, as opposed to just 29 per cent of Exmoor menus. Equally, 62 per cent of Lake District menus explicitly stated that some ingredients had come from non-local places, while only 23 per cent of Exmoor menus had done likewise. These differences are supported by Tables 13 and 14, which list specific references to local and non-local ingredients. In total, the Lake

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H = Current tourist interviews   R = Interviews with café and restaurant owners
P = Interviews with food producers

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District had 26 references to local products, and 38 references to non-local products, while the equivalent figures for Exmoor were 10 and 16 respectively. Such differences support Chapter 7.5, which argues that the Lake District's local food industry is more fully developed than Exmoor's. As stated on p.318, these differences could result from the fact that the Lake District also has a more developed tourism industry than that of Exmoor[15]. While the Lake District enjoys larger numbers of visitors throughout the year, Exmoor's lesser visitor numbers and smaller resident population do not provide such a sustained market for local products, particularly during the winter. It could also be argued that the Lake District's larger visitor economy results in a greater degree of competition between restaurateurs and, consequently, it may be more important for these businesses to distinguish themselves through the sophisticated marketing of local sourcing policies.

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[15] See Chapter 3.3 (p.96) for visitor statistics on the Lake District and Exmoor.

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H = Current tourist interviews   R = Interviews with café and restaurant owners
P = Interviews with food producers

Table 7. References to the specific origins of local ingredients

Exmoor examples of references to specific origins of local ingredients	Lake District examples of references to specific origins of local ingredients
• Miles' tea and coffee • Dunstable Farm ice cream • Devon Hills Water • Exmoor Gold (Real ale) • Brendon Hill Crafts preserves • Fudge from Weekhayne Farm • Cheese names: Exmoor Brie, Tinners Blue, Taw Valley Vintage Cheddar, Devon Oke, St Endillon Brie, Somerset Mature Cheddar, Sharpham rustic • Lynmouth Bay lobster • Countisbury lamb • Lyn Valley salmon	• Farrer's coffee • Lancashire cheese from Garstang • Ham from Richardson's butchers, Bowness • Eggs from a Windermere farm • Low Sizergh Farm organic eggs • Kendal creamy cheese • Tea cakes "made fresh every morning by Le Pain de Paris bakery in Staveley" • Bury black pudding • Ullswater trout • Cartmel sticky toffee pudding • Waberthwaite Cumberland sausage • "English Lakes Ice cream made with milk from Ulverston" • "Gluten free puddings from Kendal" • "Chocolate and damson pudding made by Sweet Home Ambleside" • Cartmel sticky toffee pudding • Jam from the Hawkshead Relish Company • "Freshly baked bread from Staveley and Kendal" • Grasmere gingerbread • Grasmere gingerbread • Waberthwaite air dried ham • Fleetwood haddock • Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire cheese • Coniston Bluebird (Real Ale) • Goosnargh chicken • Cartmel valley pheasant • Grizedale venison

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X = In-depth interviews with university staff   E = Interviews with food and tourism experts
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Table 8. References to non-local ingredients

Exmoor examples of references to non-local origins of ingredients	Lake District examples of references to non-local origins of ingredients
• Welsh rarebit • Lincolnshire fish cakes • Wiltshire ham • Cumberland sausage • Scottish salmon • Gressingham duck • Atlantic prawns • French brandy • Belgian chocolate • Italian truffle • New Zealand green lip mussels • World salamis • Gressingham duck • St Etienne sea bass • New England clam chowder • Aberdeen Angus steak	• "Greek lettuce and feta cheese" • Swiss bacon • Swiss cheese • Whitby scampi • Italian biscotti • Brie from France • North Atlantic prawns • Scottish minced beef • Belgian waffle • Cornish pasty • Hildon mineral water • Yorkshire pudding • "Dove's Farm and Kallo gluten free products plus clotted cream" • Norwegian prawns • Scottish smoked salmon • "Highland haggis pot" • Bantry Bay mussels • Royal Greenland prawns • Tuscan tomato sauce • Swiss speciality rosti • Ciabatta Romana • Icelandic prawns • Italian macaroni • Mediterranean vegetables • Cornish clotted cream • Barnsley lamb chops • Yorkshire pudding • Mediterranean lasagne verdi • Whitby breaded scampi • Italian figs • Italian pasta • "Duck from the Perigord region of France" • Somerset Brie • Cornish sea bass • Japanese black tiger king prawns • Scottish salmon • Thai tiger prawns • Gressingham duck breast

Codes used:
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H = Current tourist interviews   R = Interviews with café and restaurant owners
P = Interviews with food producers

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In addition to highlighting differences between the study regions, Tables 13 and 14 provide more detailed illustrations of the benefits of being specific about sourcing. In relation to local ingredients, being specific can enhance the distinctiveness of a product, as described by E9 (40s, male, regional food group representative, South West). Thus ice cream is not just ice cream, but "English Lakes ice cream made with milk from Ulverston", and cheese is not just cheese but "Taw Valley Vintage Cheddar". By making the product origins explicit, the menu is adding an element of difference through strengthening the links between food and place. Such tactics are not only employed by small eating establishments in tourist destinations: a similar – and extremely successful – advertising campaign was launched by Marks and Spencer in 2005, as television viewers around the UK were treated to seductive descriptions and lingering images of luxurious foods, culminating in the slogan: 'This is not just food. This is M&S food'.

Such descriptions also utilise the reciprocal relationship between place image and food (p.243) because desirable food qualities – such as freshness, organic standards and handmade production processes – can come to be linked with a product's place of origin. Table 7 shows that tea-cakes, for example, are not just "made" by Le Pain de Paris in Staveley, but "made fresh every morning". We also learn that the eggs from Windermere are "organic", while cheese names like "Sharpham rustic" or "Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese" evoke images of small-scale artisan production in a wholesome farmhouse kitchen. Of course, local food purists might question the inclusion of Lancashire cheese on a Cumbrian menu and this provides further evidence

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that local food is a contested concept without defined geographical boundaries, as discussed in Section 6.2.

We can also see how places are symbolised by certain foods. Table 7 shows that local speciality dishes are given a further element of authenticity by emphasising that they were also made in the area. Thus sticky toffee pudding becomes 'Cartmel sticky toffee pudding', while Cumberland sausage becomes 'Waberthwaite Cumberland sausage'. A similar process is also observed in Table 8, where well-known ingredients of other countries or regions – such as French brandy, Belgian chocolate and Scottish salmon – are included.

Paradoxically, the inclusion of non-local specialities reaffirms the importance of the perceived link between place and food quality, in addition to adding distinction to the menu. By highlighting that ingredients have been sourced from the places that are famous for them, the restaurateur seeks to create the belief that no expense has been spared in procuring the best ingredients from around the world. However, this process works only if the place in question is associated with that particular product. An Exmoor restaurateur, for example, would gain little benefit from promoting 'Lincolnshire salmon' because, in the mind of the customer, Lincolnshire is unlikely to be associated with fish production. However, the same restaurateur could easily promote 'Lincolnshire sausages' because this accords with existing consumer perceptions about the links between food quality and place.

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P = Interviews with food producers

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Therefore, although the trend towards local sourcing is important, Table 8 shows that it is not the whole story because, for certain products at least, distinction and authenticity are achieved through going further afield for ingredients. In short, place image remains a crucial strategy for creating authenticity and distinction on a menu, and yet, as Table 8 shows, the place in question does not always have to be a local one.

Arguments about the need for distinction also suggest that there may be variations in terms of the strategies employed by different types of establishment. For example, more expensive, prestigious eateries might be expected to promote food quality and local sourcing more prominently in order to distinguish themselves from their rivals. Figure 8 shows the same menu strategies, but this time the data have been segmented by price bracket rather than by study area. Three price brackets were created for Figure 8 – low (where the average price of a meal was under £5), medium (where the average price of a meal was between £5 and £10), and high (where the average price of a meal was over £10).

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P = Interviews with food producers

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Figure 8. Strategies for promoting food according to price bracket
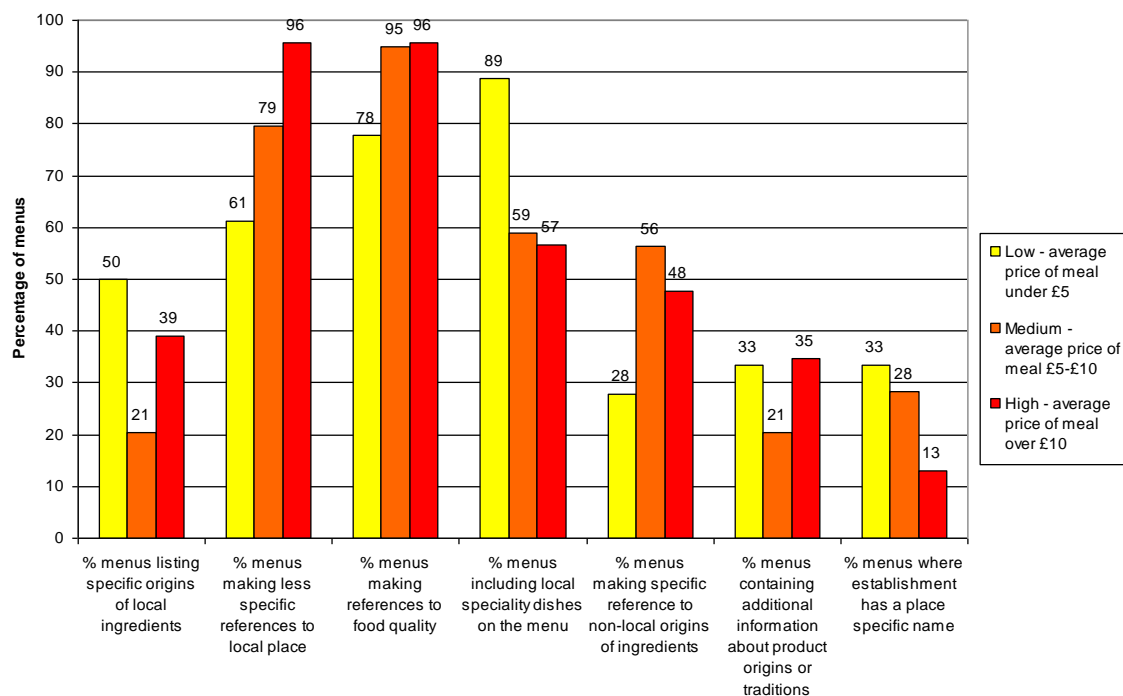
If we accept the argument that the distinctiveness of an eatery can be boosted by menu strategies that emphasise 'locality', we might expect these strategies to become increasingly prevalent as menu prices get higher, on the grounds that more expensive venues will have a greater need to present themselves as exclusive in order to command higher prices from diners. If this were the case, we would expect to see a step-like increase from low to medium to high price bracket menus for each of the strategies outlined. However, Figure 8 shows that this is not the case, because the three bar-chart profiles appear fairly similar, indicating that differences between the price brackets are relatively small. Indeed, only two strategies – less specific references to local place and references to food quality – show a step-like increase. By contrast, two strategies – those relating to the use of local specialities and place-

specific names – show a decrease from low to medium to high, while the remaining three show mixed results.

Such findings suggest that price bracket is not a good indicator of the degree to which locality and authenticity are promoted on menus. The interesting question is why this is so. One reason is that the price differentials shown in Figure 8 are associated with different kinds of eating establishment. As shown in Table 9, cafés, pubs and restaurants tend to have different price brackets simply because they serve different kinds of meal, with cafés tending towards daytime snacks and light meals – such as sandwiches, cakes and soups – while pubs and restaurants are associated with more substantial main meals.

Table 9. Showing average price of meal from collected menus

Type of establishment	Average price of meal
Café	£5.25
Pub	£7.69
Restaurant	£12.48

Clearly, customers cannot be expected to pay as much for a snack as they would for a main meal, meaning that cafés will inevitably be associated with lower prices. Traditionally, restaurants have also been able to charge higher prices than pubs because they have tended to produce more complex dishes in a formal eating environment, whereas pubs have tended to focus more upon providing hearty yet simple meals in an informal atmosphere. In reality, distinctions between eateries are not this clear-cut because, as I shall illustrate, there is as much variation within the categories of café, pub and restaurant, as there is between them. However, the fact remains that the ways

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in which proprietors can use the various menu strategies highlighted in Figures 21 and 22 will be affected by the kind of food that is served.

For example, Section 6.2 showed that many of the local specialities associated with the Lake District and Exmoor are snack foods, such as Grasmere Gingerbread, Kendal Mint Cake, fudge or cream teas. Such items would be more at home in a café environment than they would on a restaurant menu, and this explains why 89 per cent of lower price bracket menus included local specialities, as opposed to only 59 and 57 per cent of middle and high price bracket menus, respectively (Figure 8). By contrast, it could be argued that restaurants are more likely to focus on innovative or complex dishes requiring ingredients or culinary styles from overseas – hence the fact that more medium and high price bracket menus make specific references to non-local ingredients (56 and 48 per cent respectively, Figure 8).

Both examples help explain why the anticipated step-like increase from low to medium to high-priced menus failed to materialise. However, as I have indicated, attempts to predict menu strategies by classifying an establishment as a café, pub or restaurant are equally unreliable because of the high degree of variation within, as well as between, categories. This is particularly problematic in locations such as the Lake District or Exmoor where eateries may attempt to maximise their custom by broadening the range of services they offer – for example, the same establishment may function as a café by day and a restaurant at night, while a pub may also decide to provide coffees and sandwiches to cater for the daytime trade. In justifying the selection of

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particular café, pub and restaurant interviewees for this research, Chapter 3.6 also exemplified the kind of variations that occur by showing that eateries in both study regions encompass a broad range of styles, from country-house hotel restaurants through to foreign or speciality restaurants, and from 'gastro-pubs' to more standard pubs (p.112). Within these different styles, there is also considerable variation in terms of the ethos of the establishment, with corresponding differences in how locality is used. Therefore, the use of locality and authenticity on menus does not alter in a systematic way that can be predicted by reference to one-dimensional variables, such as price bracket or type of establishment. Instead, menu strategies are multi-dimensional and vary in accordance with a complex mix of factors related to the style and nature of the eatery and the style and nature of the dishes served. This is best illustrated through qualitative analysis of some of the menus collected from the study regions (Plates 1-5).

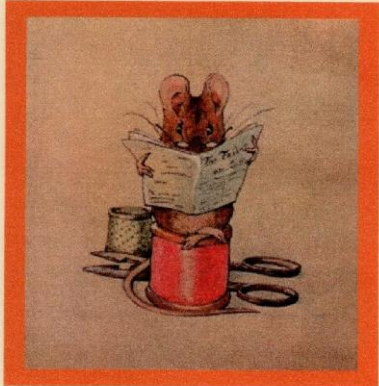**Plate 1. Tailor of Gloucester Tearoom, Bowness-on-Windermere**

My Dear Freda,

Because you are fond of fairy-tales, and have been ill, I have made you a story all for yourself - a new one that nobody has read before.

And the queerest thing about it is - that I heard it in Gloucestershire, and that it true - at least about the tailor, the waistcoat, and the "No more twist!"

Beatrix Potter
Christmas, 1901

Tailor of Gloucester Tea room

Lunch Menu

Soup of the Day

Soup is by far the easiest way of achieving your 'five a day'. Ours is made fresh every day using worldwide recipes and the finest local ingredients, finished with a variety of toppings.

Hot freshly baked roll	£3-45
Dressed mixed salad bowl	£3-45
Speciality bread of the day	£3-95
Cheesy garlic bread	£3-95
Extra brown or white roll	50p

The Meal - Deal

Can't decide what to have?
Why not have both!
Choose from a baguette, ciabatta melt or freshly baked potato with a filling of your choice and have a bowl of delicious fresh soup on the side.

Soup & a baguette	£5-45
Soup & a jacket potato	£6-45
Soup & a ciabatta melt	£6-95

Hot Filled Jacket Potatoes

Freshly baked every morning, served with a touch of salad & crunchy tortilla chips, delicious !

Cheese & speciality pickle	£4-95
Tuna & mayonnaise	£4-95
Bacon, beans & cheese	£4-95
Coronation chicken	£4-95

Chicken Caesar Salad

Chicken breast pieces on fresh lettuce leaves, with crunchy croutons and bacon pieces and a creamy garlic Caesar dressing. Gorgeous !
Served with speciality bread of the day.
£5-25

Freshly Made Baguettes

Made to order on white or brown served with a touch of salad and our specially selected chutney of the week to set the sandwich alight.

Creamy Lancashire cheese
Tasty & smooth, made in Garstang

Locally produced home baked ham
from Richardson's butchers in Bowness

Free range egg mayo & bacon pieces
Lakeland eggs from a Windermere farm

Creamy brie & fresh sliced apple
A creamy French favourite with a crunch

Fruity coronation chicken
Chicken pieces in a creamy curried mayonnaise with a mango twist

Tangy tuna mayonnaise
Tuna chunks in a light lemony Mayonnaise
all £ 3-95

Also check out our

THE WORLD OF BEATRIX POTTER ATTRACTION

Plate 2. The African Café, Exmoor Zoo, Bratton Fleming
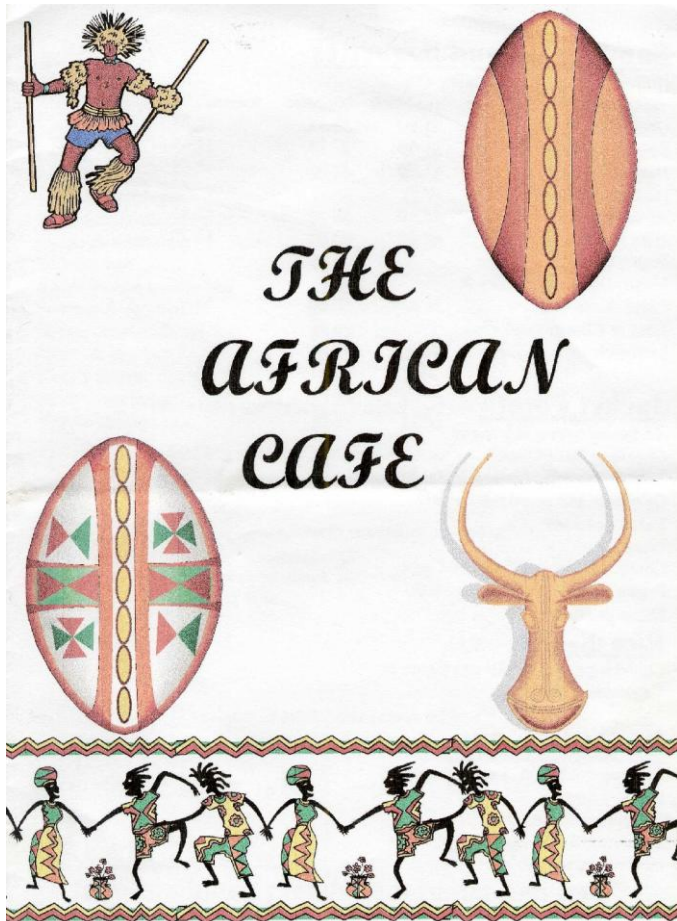
Sandwiches and baguettes

(fillings subject to availability please ask)

	sandwich	baguette	toasted s/w with side salad
Cheese	£1.60	£2.75	£2.45
Cheese & tomato or pickle	£1.80	£2.75	£2.65
Ham or Tuna mayo,	£1.90	£2.95	£2.65
Ham & tomato or pickle or cucumber	£2.10	£2.95	£2.85
Ham & Cheese	£2.35	£2.95	£3.20
Prawn Cocktail, Chicken Mayo, Chicken in honey & Chilli sauce	N/A	£2.95	N/A
Ham or Cheese salad sandwich	£2.50	£3.00	

Jacket Potato (fillings subject to availability please ask)

All served with a side salad

Cheese or Baked beans or Coleslaw	£3.00
Tuna & Mayo or Cheese & Baked beans Or cheese and coleslaw	£3.50
Extra portions	**.75p ea**
Chicken Curry or Chilli con Carne, Prawn Cocktail or Chicken Mayo	£3.95
Extra portions	**.95p ea**

Rice dishes

Chicken curry or Chilli con Carne or Vegetable curry	£3.95

BREAKFASTS (SERVED UNTIL 12.00)

2 sausage, 2 bacon, 1 egg, tomato, beans, 2 toast	£3.95
Veggie breakfast, 2 sausage, 2 toast, beans, egg, mushroom, tomato	£3.95
Toast 2 slices	**.80p**
Toast and jam	**£1.00**

Plates 1 and 2 make an interesting comparison because both the Tailor of Gloucester Tearoom and the African Café were eateries attached to visitor attractions (The World of Beatrix Potter and Exmoor Zoo respectively). Both establishments serve similar snack foods in the form of sandwiches, baguettes and jacket potatoes, and both also fall into the lowest price bracket identified on Figure 8. However, here the similarities cease.

The most immediate differences relate to the imagery used on the menus because, although both establishments include place imagery, they do so in very different ways. Plate 1 shows that the Tailor of Gloucester Tearoom is strongly linked with the Lake District through its obvious connections with the children's author Beatrix Potter. This is achieved primarily through naming the establishment after one of Potter's most popular books. However, the use of illustrations from the books, a rural leaf motif border, and a quotation from the author herself all help strengthen the perceived associations between the tearoom and its locality. It could even be argued that the decision to call it a 'tearoom' rather than a 'café' adds an element of distinction through the former's associations with traditional English gentility. In contrast to the sophisticated design of the Tailor of Gloucester menu, the African Café has a much more basic look (Plate 2). Colour and graphics are used only on the cover of the menu, and the African theme, while fitting for a zoo, has no connections with the café's Exmoor location.

These differing uses of locality persist on further inspection of the text. The African Café's menu acts as a purely functional statement of information – it tells us only what the various choices are and how much they cost. By

contrast, the Tailor of Gloucester menu is much more descriptive, thanks to extra references to food quality ("speciality", "delicious", "fresh", "creamy") and locality ("locally produced home baked ham", "Lakeland eggs from a Windermere farm") which help to create distinction. For example, while the African Café offers a simple "cheese baguette", the Tailor of Gloucester offers a "freshly made creamy Lancashire cheese baguette" which, we are told, is "tasty and smooth, made in Garstang".

Here, then, are two establishments which, in theory at least, are very similar – both are cafés/tearooms; both provide snacks and light lunches, and both use some form of place imagery on their menus. However, in all other respects they are in complete contrast, with the Tailor of Gloucester making full use of strategies relating to locality and food quality in order to create a high degree of distinction that enables the tearoom to command slightly higher prices. In contrast, the African Café eschews such tactics by employing a non-local place theme and by using purely functional language that makes no attempt at distinction, with the result that the prices charged are lower.

Similar differences were in evidence among pubs and restaurants serving main meals as Plates 3-5 show.

Plate 3. Lakeview Bar and Restaurant, Bowness-on-Windermere

LAKEVIEW
BAR AND RESTAURANT

STARTERS

Soup of the Day — £ 3.15
Served with a fresh chunk of baguette and butter.

Garlic Breaded Mushrooms — £ 3.65
Breaded and served with garlic mayonnaise dip and lightly dressed salad garnish.

Prawn Cocktail — £ 4.15
North Atlantic prawns in Marie Rose sauce, served on a bed of mixed salad leaves and a chunk of baguette.

Sharing Combo — £ 7.15
Favourite for sharing. Lemon & ginger marinated chicken skewers, breaded wholetail scampi, garlic breaded mushrooms, seasoned potato wedges, battered onion rings and garlic bread. All served with tortilla chips and selection of dips – B.B.Q, garlic mayonnaise and tomato salsa.

MAIN COURSES

Chicken Tikka Masala — £ 7.95
Marinated pieces of chicken breast served in a medium spicy, creamy tomato and coconut sauce with basmati rice, naan bread, poppadom and onion bhaji.

Breaded Wholetail Scampi — £ 6.95
A pub favourite served with chips and choice of peas or salad garnish.

Fish 'n' Chips ^ — £ 6.95
A fillet of haddock in crispy batter served with chips and choice of peas or salad garnish.

Fillet of Salmon & Prawn Béarnaise ^ — £8.49
Fillet of salmon topped with prawns and a creamy béarnaise sauce. Served with potatoes, peas and carrots.

Cheese and Bacon Burger — £ 6.55
Served in a sesame seed bun with mayonnaise and salad served with chips, battered onion rings and salad garnish.

Steak, Mushroom and Ale Pie — £ 6.95
Served with chips, peas and carrots.

All Day Breakfast — £ 6.55
Two premium pork sausages, grilled bacon, baked beans, mushrooms, grilled tomato and two fried eggs. Served with chips.

Cottage Pie (new) — £ 6.99
Scottish minced beef and chunky carrots in a rich gravy, all topped with mash and a cheese topping. Served with chips, peas and carrots.

Aberdeen Angus Lasagne (new) — £ 6.99
Our lasagne is made with Aberdeen Angus beef and served with chips, garlic bread and a lightly dressed salad garnish.

Smothered Chicken (new) — £ 7.99
Grilled chicken breast topped with bacon and cheese, smothered in a delicious sauce of your choice. Choose from Diane or Bacon, red wine and mushroom. Served with chips, peas and carrots.

Half Roast Chicken — £ 7.45
Served with stuffing balls, mini pork sausages, roast and mashed potatoes, broccoli, carrots, peas and plenty of gravy.

GRILL SELECTION

10oz* Gammon Steak — £ 7.15
Topped with fried egg and pineapple. Served with chips, peas and grilled tomato.

10oz* Rump Steak — £ 9.55
Served with chips, peas, mushrooms and grilled tomato.

Grilled Chicken Breast. — £ 6.95
Succulent chicken breast served with chips, peas, carrots and gravy.

Plate 4. Tarr Farm Inn, Tarr Steps, Exmoor

A typical example of our Restaurant Menu

Starters

Mussels with Black Bean, Spring Onion,
Coriander & Soy
£6.50

Seared Hand Dived Scallops with Du Puy Lentils
and Mild Curry and Chardonnay Sauce
£7.25

Braised Exmoor Meatballs
on Pea Pancake and Onion Jus
£4.95

Chicken Liver Parfait with Toasted Brioche
and Port and Date Chutney
£5.25

Pumpkin Soup with Parmesan
and Sautéed Wild Mushrooms
£3.95

Warm Confit of Gressingham Duck Leg
with Rocket Beetroot Salad
and Raspberry Vinaigrette
£5.50

Wild Rocket and Parmesan Risotto
with White Truffle Oil
£4.95

Main Courses

Seared Fillet of Sea Bass with
Pressed Leek Terrine, Mussel & Chervil Sauce
£16.50

Fillet of Exmoor Beef
with Spinach Purée and Wild Mushrooms,
Fondant Potato and Madeira Jus
£17.50

Roast Saddle of Venison with Bubble and
Squeak, Miniature Venison Pie
and Game Sauce
£15.00

Braised Roasted Belly of Pork
with Celeriac Mash,
Calvados and Sage Sauce and Black Pudding
£13.50

Gnocchi with Basil Pesto, Pine Nuts
and Roasted Cherry Tomatoes
£12.95

Chump of Exmoor Lamb
with Dauphinoise Potato, Red Onion Confit
and Rosemary and Lamb Sauce
£15.50

Poached Fillet of Brill with Roasted Shallots,
Crispy Panacetta and Rich Shiraz Sauce
£15.95

Desserts

To enjoy your dessert, we would recommend
**Chateau Belingard AC 1996/97
Montbazillac**
The Semillon and Muscadelle Grapes
produce a subtle and elegant flavour
and a rich golden honey colour
£14.50

Desserts
£4.95

Dark Chocolate Torte with Orange and Vanilla
Mascarpone and Orange Confit

Sticky Date Pudding
with Toffee Sauce & Vanilla Bean Ice Cream

Vanilla Panna Cotta with Poached Plums

Baileys Bread & Butter Pudding
with Baileys Crème Anglaise

Apple Bavarois
with Apple Crisps and Apple Sorbet

A Selection of Four Local Cheeses
served with accompaniments
*Exmoor Blue, St Endillon Brie,
Somerset Mature Cheddar,
Sharpham Rustic*
£5.95

Ice Creams and Sorbets
Vanilla, Mint Chocolate Chip,
Strawberry, Chocolate

Lemon, Blackcurrant
£3.50

Coffee
Cappuccino, Latté, Espresso,
Regular Coffee & Petit Fours
£1.85

Double Espresso
£2.00

We only use the best local produce available

Plate 5. Cobblestones, Dunster, Exmoor

Evening Menu

Friday 29th & Saturday 30th July

Flame Roasted Pepper, Goats Cheese & Rocket Bruschetta (V) £4.95
Warm toasted ciabatta bread topped with roasted pepper, goats
cheese & rocket finished with a drizzle of fresh basil oil.

Smoked Trout & Baked Beetroot Salad (V) £4.95
Deliciously delicate smoked trout fillet served on a baked beetroot & caper salad, topped with rocket

Prawn & Mango Salad £4.50
Atlantic prawns & fresh mango in a light mayonnaise dressing seasoned with a little
chilli, lime and fresh coriander served on leaf salad

Local Farmhouse Pate £3.95
A delicious chunk of pate served with toasted baguette & dressed salad

Lemon Sole, Potato Crush & Saffron Cream Sauce £11.95
Fresh pan-fried lemon sole fillets served on olive oil potato crush dressed with a creamy saffron sauce
accompanied with steamed vegetables

Beef Stroganoff with Herbed Rice £10.95
Pan fried strips of beef fillet steak in a creamy mushroom, white wine & brandy sauce seasoned with
Paprika, accompanied with fresh herbed rice

Oriental Honey & Ginger Glazed Duck £11.95
Tender duck breast in a honey & ginger glaze served with fried rice & oriental spiced wok fried vegetables

White Wine & Lemon Thyme Chicken £9.95
Succulent chicken with a white wine & lemon thyme sauce, with sauté new potatoes & bacon
accompanied with steamed vegetables

Moroccan Vegetable Tagine (V) £8.95
A delicious mildly spiced fruity casserole of vegetables, served with herbed cous cous,
garnished with toasted almonds

Rump Steak (10 oz approx uncooked) £9.95   Fillet Steak (8 oz approx uncooked) £11.95
Prime local beef served with chips, sliced field mushrooms, peas & onion rings

Fresh Lemon Posset £3.50
A delicious & old-fashioned English pudding, zesty & creamy served with fresh raspberries

Baked Vanilla Cheese Cake £3.50
A rich & creamy cheese cake on a biscuit base served with either our own fresh
raspberry or chocolate sauce

Pear & Almond Tart £3.50
A baked tart of pear & almond frangipan served with cream or ice-cream

A fine selection of Wines, Spirits, Beers, teas and coffees

For table reservations & enquiries please call 01643 821595

Plates 3-5 show examples of restaurant menus from my study areas. Once again, there are similarities between them in that locality plays a role in the names of all three eateries, with Tarr Farm being named after Tarr Steps – a famed Exmoor beauty spot, while Lakeview and Cobblestones both refer to particular characteristics of the local environment (Lakeview Bar and Restaurant had a view of Lake Windermere from its dining room, while Cobblestones had a cobbled pavement in front of it). Also, unlike Plates 1 and 2, the menus do not use illustrations.

However, on closer inspection, there are also major differences between them. Firstly, the look and feel of the menus varies considerably. Lakeview's menu (Plate 3) was laminated and appears more cluttered than the other two, thanks to the inclusion and description of 11 main courses. It also appears quite basic in design, using a standard, Times New Roman font and a simple border graphic of stars. By contrast, Tarr Farm's menu (Plate 4) has a more polished look. It is printed on high quality paper, uses less text and a stylish font, and is surrounded by a plain red border. Cobblestones' menu (Plate 5) is different again. Like Tarr Farm's menu, it is clean and uncluttered, with only 7 main courses in comparison to Lakeview's 11. It is also printed on good quality, pale yellow card. However, unlike Tarr Farm, this menu has a more relaxed, contemporary feel. Small cobblestone motifs, in keeping with the name of the restaurant, are used to separate the courses, while the font used is modern and flamboyant.

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These differences persist when the dishes and descriptions offered by the menus are examined in more detail. Such analysis reveals that uses of locality vary between the three menus. However, the menus also show that perceived locality is not the only factor involved in creating distinction, and this helps explain why price bracket is not directly related to the use of locality on menus (Fig. 8).

Apart from the mention of "North Atlantic prawns", "Aberdeen Angus lasagne" and "Scottish minced beef", Lakeview's menu makes no reference to local or non-local places and, in terms of both the dishes offered and the ingredients used, there is nothing to indicate that this is a menu from the Lake District. Instead, the menu is based around what it describes as "pub favourites" that we might expect to find anywhere in the UK, such as "steak, mushroom and ale pie", "chicken tikka masala" and "fish'n'chips". There is some attempt to promote dishes through references to food quality such as "creamy", "premium", "delicious", "succulent" – all of which suggest hearty, indulgent meals. However, the majority of these descriptions are purely functional explanations of what the dish contains or how it is served, rather than obvious attempts to create distinction. As a result, prices are low in comparison to those charged by Tarr Farm or Cobblestones, both of which make more effort to appear distinctive.

In contrast to Lakeview, Tarr Farm relies on a strong use of locality to add distinction to its menu. For example, we have "Exmoor meatballs", "Exmoor lamb" and "four local cheeses" – all of which are listed by name for greater

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clarity and distinction. Venison, which is often associated with Exmoor, also makes an appearance on the menu, while customers are told "we use only the best local produce available". However, non-local places are also important in terms of some of the ingredients and dishes offered. For example, we have "Gressingham" duck leg, in addition to French and Italian influences in the form of "gnocchi with basil pesto", "dauphinoise potato", "pancetta", "panna cotta", "Baileys crème Anglaise" and the various wines promoted. The dishes on offer are therefore more innovative than the well-known pub favourites offered by Lakeview, and complex culinary terms such as "jus", "terrine" and "confit" are also used. When compared to the simple adjectives used on Lakeview's menu (p.3269), these terms result in a greater level of distinction because no additional descriptions are given, and therefore the customer must possess the necessary culinary knowledge to decipher the meanings of these words.

Tarr Farm's menu is designed to emphasise the distinctiveness of its restaurant. However, although locality is important, the role that it plays is much less straightforward than on the Tailor of Gloucester's menu (Plate 1) because additional factors – such as an emphasis on non-local places and styles of cooking, as well as a focus on the culinary skills of the chef – are equally important in creating distinction. It is the *combination* of these factors that allows Tarr Farm to charge prices that are double those on Lakeview's menu.

This point is supported by Cobblestones' menu (Plate 5). Like Lakeview's menu, Cobblestones' offers short descriptions of each dish so that customers can be clear about what they will be getting without needing a high level of culinary expertise. These descriptions also make reference to food quality through adjectives such as "delicious", "tender", "creamy", and "rich". However, although locality plays some role – note references to "local farmhouse pâté", "prime local beef" and "old-fashioned English pudding" – Cobblestones' main strategy for creating distinction is its emphasis on culinary styles from around the world so that, for example, we have Mediterranean influences in the form of "flame roasted pepper, goats' cheese and rocket bruschetta", African influences in "Moroccan vegetable tagine", and Asian influences in "Oriental honey and ginger glazed duck", to name but a few. In contrast to Tarr Farm, Cobblestones' does not place as much emphasis on locality or the chef's high level of culinary expertise. However, the range of culinary styles employed creates an element of distinction for customers by offering them dishes that may well be different to the staple 'pub favourites' found elsewhere.

Therefore the menu analysis presented in this section demonstrates that a wide variety of strategies were being employed by eateries in both the Lake District and Exmoor. These strategies reveal much about the ways in which place is used to promote food. Interviews with tourists and providers revealed that perceived locality and authenticity play an important role in holiday food experiences (Section 6.4 and 6.5), and the menu analysis supports this finding by showing that references to some form of locality were important to the

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majority of eateries in the study areas. However, as Figure 7 shows, such references can take very different forms – from explicit statements about the sourcing of key ingredients ("made in Garstang" – Tailor of Gloucester Tearoom menu, p.264), to less-specific terms such as "local", "Lakeland", "Exmoor" *etc.*, and the use of local speciality products such as Grasmere Gingerbread or cream teas. Locality can also be made apparent through the use of a place-specific name for the establishment, or through the imagery used on menus, as was the case with the Tailor of Gloucester Tearoom's decision to incorporate well-known Beatrix Potter illustrations.

However, the menu analysis also shows that perceived locality is not the only strategy used to create distinction. Instead, café and restaurant owners employ a hybrid blend of promotional strategies so that the same menu may combine references to locality with references to non-local place and a sophisticated and cosmopolitan range of culinary techniques. For example, Tables 13 and 14 and Plates 4 and 5 show that the use of ingredients and culinary styles from a range of places can also create distinction by enabling proprietors to convey the impression that no expense has been spared in procuring the best ingredients from across the world. Thus Tarr Farm's menu (Plate 4) is not afraid to promote Exmoor lamb and local cheeses alongside more cosmopolitan inspired dishes such as "seared hand dived scallops with Du Puy lentils and mild curry and Chardonnay sauce". Indeed, different ingredients and culinary styles are even combined in the same dish so that, for example, we have what we might consider to be 'hybrid' dishes such as Exmoor lamb accompanied by French-inspired "dauphinoise potato" and "red

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onion confit". Distinction is also created by promoting the chef's high level of culinary expertise – hence the use of complex culinary terminology and the creation of increasingly innovative dishes and flavours that can be marketed as being unique to one particular restaurant.

These factors explain why the use of locality on menus is not related to price bracket in a straightforward way (Fig. 8). I would argue that prices tend to be related to the degree of distinction that that eatery commands. An emphasis on locality may be one way of creating such distinction but it is not the only method of doing so – hence the conflicting trends seen in Figure 8. Consequently, if we wish to understand how locality is used, we need to consider, not just the price bracket of the establishment, but also a range of factors relating to the style and nature of the eatery and the style and nature of the dishes served. However, the use of place imagery on menus also shows that the relationship between food and place can result from a conscious process of construction by restaurateurs, and this raises questions about the meaning of authenticity in relation to local food, as the following section describes.

6.7 The spectrum of authenticity as experienced through food and place

Social constructivists could argue that 'local' products are not always as local as they appear. For example, products such as the chocolates made by P9 (40s, male, chocolate producer, Exmoor) rely on the supply of large amounts of ingredients from abroad. This might be expected for products like chocolates and cakes because cocoa, sugar and spices are not grown in the

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UK. However, even P7's jams and chutneys (30s, male, jam producer, Lake District), which might be expected to use local fruit, do not necessarily do so as a result of the difficulties of obtaining a regular volume and supply of ingredients (see Chapter 7.2.2).

Equally, as businesses grow, there are pressures to scale-up production processes and comply with increasingly complex legislation. This can encourage producers to introduce greater levels of mechanisation that are at odds with the consumer's image of bespoke products being hand produced in a small kitchen. For example, P5 (40s, male, meat producer, Lake District) based his pies on traditional recipes but had the challenge of getting them to work in a large-scale setting with modern production techniques, while P2 (40s, male, large bakery owner, Lake District) had also changed the way in which some of his products were named. Section 6.6 showed that labels such as 'Lakeland' or 'West Country' can help construct a relationship between food and place. However, in some circumstances, there is little meaning behind the local name, as P2 explained:

"We had a product which was a very nice sultana cake… We made that as Devon Fruit Cake for years, and it did nothing – it just stayed on the shelf knocking around. I changed it to Cumbrian Fruit Cake, and it's one of our better-selling products… It's like our Dundee Cake – we made a Dundee Cake, and we can't sell that here. We now call our version of the Dundee Cake a Westmorland Cake. And it's not a big seller – it's not like the Cumbrian. But it still does better than Dundee."

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Such examples illustrate the ways in which producers play with authenticity by constructing links between food and place in order to increase the appeal of a product for visitors. Honesty about the creative nature of this construction process caused three interviewees (R24, P2 and P4) to question the extent to which an authentic local food industry was possible in an increasingly globalised world. For example, P2 (40s, male, large bakery owner, Lake District) argued that successful local products would inevitably be replicated and sold on a wider scale, with the result that genuinely distinctive local foods were rare.

> *"Everyone is trying to grasp on the tourism bandwagon at the moment. And a lot of it is artificially created, isn't it? … I have a product – Borrowdale tea bread – which does very, very well. But is it truly a local product? It's only local because we've made it. Lakeland Plumbread – other people in other places in the country produce a plumbread, but we produce 'Lakeland Plumbread'. Ours is better than others – I believe that – but it's only local because we just happen to be here and we're making it."*

If producers and providers can question the construction of authenticity in this way, where does this leave the visitor? If we follow Boorstin's (1964) arguments, we could view the poor tourist as being continually duped by 'fake' products, and forever prevented from having a truly authentic food experience. However, Boorstin viewed authenticity as an objective, measurable concept, in contrast to contemporary academics who argue that the concept is socially

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constructed, as outlined in Chapter 2.10. This chapter contains many examples of the social construction of authenticity, including the place-based imagery used on menus and the ways in which tourists impose their own preconceived notions of place and culture on to holiday food experiences. However, in Section 6.3, I also referred to existential authenticity – a third kind of authenticity which is related to the feelings that holiday food experiences provoke within us, rather than to the physical nature of the foods and drinks themselves (Wang, 1999). Wang argues that holiday activities give us time to experience sensual pleasures and relax away from the constraints imposed by the routine of life back home. They also enable us to take renewed pleasure in our relationships with family and friends, and the result is that we feel more alive and free to be ourselves.

Such competing definitions of authenticity have caused a significant amount of conflict within the tourism literature (Chapter 2.10). However, Cohen (2002) offers a way forward by arguing that what matters most is how tourists themselves understand the concept. In short, just because objective understandings of authenticity have been discredited in academic circles does not mean that such ideas have no value for the tourist. Cohen (2002) claims that contemporary tourists seek both objective and existential authenticity on their holidays, with some visitors choosing to visit far-flung, 'undiscovered' destinations in the hope of encountering 'pure' cultures and traditions, while others are content to enjoy the existential authenticity that can result from a fun and relaxing holiday in the sun, and I would argue that similar claims can be made in relation to holiday food.

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The visitors interviewed for this study offer considerable support for Cohen's arguments because, while some descriptions, such as H56's Italian experience (p.237), reflect an enjoyment resulting from what felt like a 'typical' experience of Italian food and culture, other stories show visitors having a good time despite knowing that an experience is not 'genuine' in this way. For example, X22 (60s, male, technical assistant, Lancaster University) was sceptical about whether typical English pubs could ever be found, but he still enjoyed searching for them during his holidays in the UK: *I'm still looking for this mythical ideal which is the typical English village pub. I think, like typical English villages, they don't actually exist".* X4 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University) also explained that, although he did enjoy trying local specialities like fondue while in Switzerland, he was not averse to trying other cuisines for a change. *"If I was in Switzerland, I would go to an Indian restaurant if it was good. If it was that city's best Indian restaurant, why not go?"*

In Chapter 5.6, I argued that a spectrum exists, which ranges from different and adventurous food experiences at one end to familiar and safe experiences at the other. I showed that tourists can move creatively throughout this spectrum, sometimes choosing holidays with a high degree of familiarity and, at other times, opting for holidays with a high degree of difference. However, the examples presented here suggest that a similar spectrum of authenticity is operating. This spectrum incorporates holiday food experiences such as those described by H56 (p.237), where enjoyment results from the fact that the experience is perceived to be 'authentic' in an objective sense. However, it also includes the kind of experiences described

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by X4, which the tourist may not consider objectively 'authentic', but which can still result in enjoyment thanks to the existential authenticity described by Wang (1999).

Evidence from the qualitative interviews suggests that tourists are capable of moving throughout this spectrum in order to vary the kinds of authenticity that they experience from their holiday food experiences. This movement occurs both within and between holidays, as the example of X9 (40s, female, administrator, Bath University) shows. X9 explained that she loved trying local and regional specialities during her holidays to France because she felt they provided an insight into the culture of the region she was visiting. This desire for 'genuine' cultural experiences implies that she was adopting an 'objective' understanding of authenticity on these occasions. However, she also stated that, in the course of a two-week holiday, she would, from time to time, try other types of food – such as pizza – in order to introduce some variety into her eating. During these meals, therefore, it could be argued that she was not concerned with seeking a 'typical' French experience. Instead, she was content to enjoy the feelings of existential authenticity that can result from the pleasures of any good holiday meal – regardless of whether it is perceived to be 'typical' of the area being visited. Therefore, by switching between different kinds of food experience, X9 was able to experience different kinds of authenticity within the same holiday.

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However, different kinds of authenticity could also relate to the same meal, as X2 (30s, male, professor, Bath University) explained when asked what style of food he had experienced during an enjoyable meal in Crete:

> *"It may have been – and I just didn't have the expertise to notice – that it was authentically Cretan. To me, it was pretty much what I would have expected in a beach resort in Southern Spain or Southern Italy – and very pleasant. I mean we ate lots of decent quality, locally caught seafood. Very pleasant – and sunk a few beers at the same time!"*

Socially constructed understandings of authenticity are important here as X2 is clearly unsure of whether Crete has a distinctive cuisine of its own. However, such doubts did not stop him experiencing the existential authenticity that was related to the relaxing atmosphere and the enjoyment of the meal itself.

These examples show that a spectrum of authenticity is operating, and that four kinds of holiday food experience can be identified:

A) Occasions where the tourist appears to have no interest in the authenticity of foods and drinks.

B) Occasions where the tourist appears to feel that a particular food/drink experience is 'authentic' in an objective sense (*e.g.* H56's experience (p.237) which was felt to be a 'typical' encounter with local place and culture).

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C) Occasions where the tourist appears to feel that a particular food/drink experience involves the social construction of authenticity (*e.g.* X22 wanting to seek out the 'typical English village pub' even though he suspected that such an establishment didn't actually exist (p.277)).

D) Occasions where the tourist appears more concerned with the existential authenticity of a holiday food/drink experience (*i.e.* experiences where the enjoyment of the meal has more to do with contextual factors such as the setting of the restaurant or the pleasure of eating with friends and family. *E.g.* X4's willingness to visit an Indian restaurant in Switzerland (p.277)).

The preceding examples show that tourists can move throughout this spectrum both between and within holidays – and between and within meals – in order to vary the kinds of authenticity that they experience. Further analysis shows that there are two main factors driving this movement. The first factor relates to the tourists' need for variety, as described in Chapter 5.2. Like X9, who would alternate 'authentic' French cuisine with other kinds of meals, some tourists were varying their food experiences in a deliberate attempt to enjoy maximum variety within the holiday. For example, as outlined previously, X4 (30s, male, lecturer, Bath University) liked taking holidays to Finland and Switzerland. However, although he enjoyed the experience of 'objective' authenticity that resulted from trying foods that he considered 'typical' local specialities – such as fondue or reindeer stew – he was also happy to try Indian or Chinese restaurants for variety, where he would

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experience the kind of existential authenticity associated with enjoying a good meal.

The second factor relates to the kind of constraints that will be discussed further in Chapter 7, whereby tourists made particular responses to authenticity as a result of necessity rather than choice. For example, X25 (30s, male, porter, Lancaster University) wanted to try local specialities during a holiday to Belgium to watch the Grand Prix. However, he discovered that the foods on offer at his destination were almost identical to those he was accustomed to eating in the UK. As a result, what began as a search for 'objective' authenticity became a situation where authenticity had no role to play. X19 (40s, female, lecturer, Lancaster University) had a similar story to tell. She explained that a main attraction of going on holiday was the chance to try local foods that she considered to be 'typical' of the destination in an objective sense. However, during her latest holiday to Portugal, she had found that such local specialities were a) hard to find and b) not to her taste. As a result, she decided to opt for the existential authenticity involved in trying other, non-local cuisines that were more readily available and enjoyable.

> *"They had this Portuguese steak which was allegedly a delicacy and it was – just imagine a steak drowned in really, really thick gravy that you could cut with a knife, and you just thought 'oh… OK'. And then there was nothing else – it was very, very commercialised. And very sort of, you know, British food, which I hate when I'm abroad. So we started eating Mexican, Italian and Chinese!"*

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The importance of such constraints will be discussed further in Chapter 7. However, the main point to note is that tourists can dip in and out of different types of food experience during the holiday. In doing so, they can vary the type of authenticity that they experience.

By conceptualising authenticity as a spectrum that includes the 'objective', the socially constructed and the existential, we can also see that local food is important in two ways. Firstly, it allows those with objective or socially constructed understandings of authenticity to try foods that they may consider to be related to the place and culture of their destination. However, local food can also contribute to the experience of existential authenticity. As described by Wang (1999), existential authenticity is about experiencing a more intense feeling of connection with ourselves, others and the world around us. In theory, existential authenticity can result from any kind of holiday food experience, regardless of whether it is local because, through our meals on holiday, we can enjoy reconnecting with family and friends while tasting indulgent, 'naughty but nice' foods that may be restricted at home. However, I would argue that a greater sense of existential authenticity can result from the consumption of local foods because the imagery surrounding these foods can help us feel that we are connecting more deeply with the people and places that produced them. For example, when describing the attraction of farm shops, E10 (30s, female, regional food group representative, Exmoor) claimed that: "A *lot of this is about the story of the food, which you don't get if you buy*

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in the supermarket. And that's what people are getting from coming to a farm shop – they're getting a bit more of an experience, really".

Similar comments were made by P1 (30s, female, small bakery owner, Lake District) when describing the popularity of her Victorian-themed bakery:

"You've got the smell, you've got the atmosphere of the shop, you've got the tradition … it's really like hand to mouth, isn't it? It goes all the way through a little production system and then you literally get it in a bag, walk out and eat it, and it can still actually sometimes be warm. And people aren't just buying that – they're buying the whole package… People want the experience. They want more."

Therefore, although tourists can be aware that 'authentic', 'local' products may involve some element of social construction – they may know, for example, that a product with a local name may be similar to products found elsewhere – the experience of consuming such foods may still help produce feelings of existential authenticity. This is because products made by a local person or produced using local ingredients have a story behind them that can be related to place and culture in a way that more generic food products consumed during everyday life back home cannot. Clearly this is not a straightforward case of 'local food = authentic and place-based', 'supermarket food = generic and placeless', because some locally grown products, such as lettuce or potatoes, become placeless as they are shipped all over the world through major wholesalers, while some supermarkets are making efforts to introduce

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local ranges which communicate information about the people and places that produced them. For this reason, it is unhelpful to think of the 'conventional' food sector and the 'alternative' sector as separate, binary opposites (Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). However, the fact remains that any food that is explicit about the place and people that produced it is food with *meaning*. This meaning comes from the fact that it has a discernible origin, and it is particularly important for tourists, because the search for existential authenticity could also be interpreted as a search for meaning. Thus tourists choosing to consume local products may not just be enjoying the physical taste of the food – instead, they are enjoying consuming the meaning behind it.

Of course, not every tourist is interested in local food. As explained in Chapter 4.4, there is a small minority of tourists for whom food is nothing more than fuel. Indeed, even those who are interested in local foods may not be able to try them as much as they would like as a result of constraints such as those imposed by family status (Chapter 7.6.3). Both factors may help explain why, although 69 of the 107 tourists interviewed reported trying something 'local', a further 38 did not do so. However, these figures show that it is rare for tourists to shun local foods completely, thus indicating that some form of locality is important to the majority of visitors. I would argue that this is because, where local products are concerned, food is no longer 'just food'. Instead, eating and drinking becomes a three-dimensional experience that enables us to connect with place and culture. Local products can also confer distinction on an eating experience because, unless the tourist regularly consumes local produce at

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home, he or she will not have had many opportunities to engage with the 'story' behind food in this way.

Discussions of authenticity also raise questions about the extent to which the relationship between food and place can be said to be socially constructed. In Chapter 2.10, I described the shift that has taken place in the tourism literature from an understanding of authenticity as an objective concept to a view of authenticity as a social construct that bears little relation to external 'reality' – if such a thing can be said to exist at all. However, the following section argues that, although social constructivism is central to the marketing of local food, there is a physical reality to the production and processing activities of the sector that is recognised and respected by tourists and producers alike.

6.8 Beyond social constructivism: the reality behind the local food sector

This chapter contains plenty of examples of how the links between food and place are socially constructed, such as P2's decision to rename his cake as 'Cumbrian fruit cake', and P7's decision to market his products as local, even though the fruit used did not come from the surrounding area. However, although the marketing of local food products is socially constructed, I would argue that the tourist's desire for existential authenticity and the producer's attempts to provide this cannot be dismissed as merely socially constructed.

As this chapter demonstrates, tourists looking for 'authentic' local foods are generally aware that such experiences involve some form of social

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construction (Urry, 1995). However, the knowledge that 'objective' authenticity is unachievable does not stop them from wanting to enjoy the kind of existential authenticity that comes from experiencing the connections between food, place and culture as best as they can. Consequently, for many of the tourists interviewed, there was a genuine desire to consume foods with meaning and some kind of story behind them. Local foods fit the bill perfectly because, although there may be some element of social construction to the imagery surrounding them, such products still enable the consumer to enjoy a sense of connection with the people and place that produced it. Therefore although there are no examples of "perfect authenticity" or "perfect locality", local foods still contain enough of both elements to be meaningful.

Social constructivists would also claim that the connections that exist between food and place have no basis in reality, and therefore local food has no validity as a concept. Instead, it is merely the result of the ways in which particular products are conceptualised and marketed by tourists and providers alike. However, this argument is flawed for two reasons. Firstly, it suggests that the tourists who consume local foods do not care whether the term 'local' has any validity. This is not, in fact, the case because tourists, while realising that 'local' may involve some element of interpretation, are also very clear about what interpretations they are willing to accept. For example, H9 (party of 2, Exmoor, youth hostelling) was aware that food souvenirs were sometimes manufactured elsewhere and then repackaged in local packaging, which she considered unacceptable: *"That's one of the things that we look for – whether or not it has been locally made. We do look on it, if we're buying it for*

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P = Interviews with food producers

someone, to see where the ingredients come from". It is therefore clear that, if the concept of local food is to remain operational, it must have some reference to external reality in terms of the production processes employed by the manufacturer and, as H9's comments illustrate, although there may be debate about what a local product is, there is considerable agreement about what it is <u>not</u>.

Similar arguments can also be applied to the producers, who were passionate supporters of the local food industry and the environmental, social and economic benefits that they felt it could bring. For these interviewees, the decision to support and participate in alternative food networks was driven, not just by economic motivations, but by their personal beliefs about the value of local food economies. P14 (50s, female, meat producer, Exmoor) was a case in point. Her business had struggled over the last few years as a result of its remote geographic location and increasing competition at farmers' markets. However, she was determined to keep going because of her belief in the importance of the local food industry.

> *"All we're trying to do is just make a living, keep our pigs – keep an old breed going – but it's been at a great financial cost to [name] and I because we've made a loss every year bar one, and we've piled money in. But we've kept a lot of people employed, I believe in the local food issue, and I do genuinely believe it is going to go right"*.

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Similar comments were expressed by P12 (40s, female, cheese producer, Exmoor), who made a point of delivering to small local shops, even though such deliveries were not very profitable, because she believed that it was important for local businesses to support each other financially.

As discussed in Chapter 7, practical constraints of economics and supply meant that producers would inevitably interpret the concept of local differently – by procuring ingredients from abroad, for example, or by renaming products in order to market them more effectively. The fact that practices varied in this way is further evidence that the 'conventional' and 'alternative' sectors should not be viewed as separate and opposing entities (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997, Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). However, although it was impossible to completely separate the sectors, it was clear that some businesses were employing strategies that involved a greater degree of social and environmental responsibility than others, and the local producers I interviewed were making considerable efforts to conduct their businesses in a way that was as beneficial to the local economy, society and environment as possible. They were also passionate about communicating the story behind their products to the consumer and, as a result of these efforts, it was clear that their products <u>did</u> have much stronger connections with place and culture than some of the more generic products manufactured throughout the world and widely available through multiple retailers.

In short, I would argue that, while the marketing of local food involves a strong element of social construction, it is wrong to suggest that the concept of local

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food itself has no basis in reality. The actions of tourists and producers show a strong belief in the importance of maintaining the integrity of the concepts behind the local food industry so that, while there might be disagreement about what constitutes local food, there remains firm agreement about what it is <u>not</u>. The majority (69 from 107) of visitors interviewed for this study had a very real desire to consume foods with meaning that offered some degree of connection between the product and the people and places that produced them. As a result, I would argue that, although ideas about the social construction of locality may be helpful in trying to understand the ways in which foods and places are marketed to tourists, researchers must realise the limitations of these ideas. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of local food, though contested, gains meaning from the fact that it has a basis in production realities, as the actions of the producers and tourists have shown.

6.9 Conclusion

The evidence presented here shows that place plays a vital role in relation to holiday food experiences. Despite extensive disagreements about the precise meaning of local food and an acknowledgement that the many different definitions of the concept have been socially constructed with particular purposes in mind, the idea of a link between food and place remains a powerful one.

As the literature suggests, the appeal of local food lies in its ability to encompass everything from a concern for environmental and social

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sustainability, through to consumer demands for foods that are safe, distinctive and traceable (Boniface, 2003, Ilbery *et al.*, 2005, Marsden, 2004). Of particular relevance to tourism is its role as a signifier for place and culture in a relationship that works both ways, whereby foods can be used to create and sell the image of a place, while place image can be used to create and sell foods. The fact that local food is able to achieve all these things is the result of its ability to forge connections between us, as consumers, and the people and places that produce our food. As I have argued in this chapter, local food is food that can communicate the story behind it, and tourists are particularly susceptible to this story because it can transform a holiday meal into a three-dimensional experience involving more than just the physical sensation of 'taste'.

The relationship between food and place also has a relevance for the way in which foods are marketed and transferred throughout the world. Whatmore and Thorne (1997) have warned against drawing a sharp distinction between place-specific 'local' food, on the one hand, and placeless 'global' food, on the other, and the evidence presented here supports this argument. The popularity of food souvenirs, for example, as well as restaurateurs' penchant for importing iconic products from elsewhere, act as reminders that some foods can be both local and global, through their ability to retain a strong association with the culture and place of their origins, despite being sold and distributed throughout the world. A more effective distinction might, therefore, be gained through abandoning the local/global dichotomy in favour of an approach which focuses on the extent to which different foods can

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communicate a sense of the places and value systems behind their production. This chapter shows that it is this meaning behind food that many tourists are seeking.

Their search is also bound-up with the quest for authenticity, as described by Yeoman (2006). Through an analysis of tourist understandings of the links between food and place, this chapter has argued that the concept of authenticity becomes less problematic if we try to view it as it is understood by the tourists themselves (Cohen, 2002). I have argued for the existence of a spectrum that can help explain why tourists, through their holiday food experiences, may have different understandings of – and responses to – authenticity at different times. In contrast to Plog (1974), Chapter 5.6 showed that tourists do not occupy fixed positions on the difference and familiarity spectrum. Instead, they tend to vary their holiday food experiences to a greater or lesser extent – sometimes choosing safer, more familiar experiences while, at other times, opting for a higher degree of difference and adventurousness. However, this chapter shows that a similar conclusion can also be applied to people's understandings of authenticity on holiday. By conceptualising authenticity as a spectrum that includes both 'objective', socially constructed and existential understandings of the concept, we can see that tourists do not occupy a fixed position on this spectrum. Instead, they vary the types of authenticity that they experience, firstly, in order to satisfy the desire for some form of variety within the holiday and, secondly, in response to a range of constraining factors (Chapter 7). The visitor's ability to adopt varying understandings of authenticity is also mirrored by food producers and

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restaurateurs who show a corresponding ability to select different understandings – and different degrees – of authenticity according to what suits their businesses best.

Viewed in this way, it is possible to see how 'locality' and 'authenticity' are highly flexible concepts. This flexibility is useful to tourists because, by adapting their definitions of these concepts according to the circumstances of the holiday, they can enjoy a variety of eating experiences without feeling disappointed if these experiences are not exactly as they imagined them to be. The fact that they are able to adapt in this way parallels the process described in Chapter 4.2, where I argued that tourists alter their expectations of the foods and drinks depending on the type of holiday they will be having. However, a flexible use of 'locality' and 'authenticity' is also beneficial to providers because they can modify their use of these concepts in order to sell food products – or destinations – more effectively, as was the case with P2's fruit cake. Such arguments indicate that attempts to develop fixed definitions of locality or authenticity would be unhelpful because, as this chapter shows, the flexibility of both concepts plays a vital role in enabling tourists and providers to reduce risks.

The fact that providers and tourists are playful with authenticity does, however, highlight the role that social construction plays in promoting the links between food and place. For example, the menu analysis shows how place imagery is carefully crafted order to enhance consumer perceptions of authenticity and market certain food products more effectively. However, there

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are limits to these social constructivist arguments because, in relation to local food, it is place in its physical sense – not just place image – that is important. This is evident from the importance of traceability in relation to local food – for example, being able to say that a particular product comes from a particular farm. It is also evident from the behaviour of tourists and food producers, both of whom can be seen to be acting in ways designed to protect the integrity of local food as a concept with a basis in reality. In short, our ideas about local food might be socially constructed, but the physical activities associated with it – such as tourists checking labels to verify the origins of ingredients, or restaurateurs deliberately choosing to support the local economy and reduce food miles through buying produce from the farm down the road – are not. Therefore, although it is unhelpful to draw a complete distinction between the sectors, there are significant practical differences between the way in which the conventional agricultural sector operates, and the way in which the alternative food sector operates. The importance of such practical activities is further illustrated by Chapter 7, which examines the impact of constraints upon tourists and providers alike.

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CHAPTER 7

STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS EXPERIENCED BY PROVIDERS AND

TOURISTS

7.1 Introduction

The preceding analysis has examined the resourceful and adaptable nature of

tourists and food and tourism professionals. However, it has not yet focused in

detail on evidence which suggests that people may also be constrained by

structural factors beyond their control. For example, by showing that some

tourists and providers were able to move more freely throughout the spectrum

of difference and familiarity than others, Chapter 5 indicated that decisions

relating to food and tourism could be influenced by a person's family status,

level of financial and cultural resources, or age. This chapter therefore

complements previous discussions about agency and the enabling role of

structure by addressing the study's final research question which asks 'what

impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food sector?'

The literature highlights economic and political structures as the major factors

obstructing development in the alternative food sector (Renting *et al.*, 2003,

Marsden, 2004, Ilbery *et al.*, 2004) with difficulties of availability and access

cited as an additional concern (Tregear *et al.*, 2007, Enteleca Research and

Consultancy, 2001). However, few theorists have examined the precise effect

that structures can have upon the links between food and tourism. This may

be because the majority of studies have chosen to concentrate exclusively on

tourists (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001, Cohen and Avieli, 2004)

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or exclusively on food producers (Tregear *et al.*, 2007, Hinrichs, 2003). By contrast, I would argue that what is needed is a holistic approach such as that taken in this chapter, which seeks to analyse the interactions of producers and consumers throughout the food chain. Such an analysis also requires consideration of the café and restaurant owners and food and tourism policy makers who act as intermediaries between the two.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the structural constraints experienced by food and tourism providers. Here, the evidence supports the existence of the three types of economic, political and accessibility constraints identified by the literature, each of which is discussed in turn. I explain that these factors should be viewed as primary constraints that overlap in complex ways to influence the kinds of activities that are possible for business owners.

However, I also show that providers hold strong personal beliefs about the importance of the local food sector that encourage them to use their agency to overcome these constraints. They do this by employing strategies that are more compatible with the 'local' food sector – for example, by being willing to change their menus in response to variations in the supply of ingredients. I then show that the extent to which they are able to make these changes will depend upon how the primary constraints of economics, politics and access intersect with a series of smaller, but equally significant, secondary structural constraints relating to factors such as seasonality, the type of business involved and its geographical location.

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This section is followed by a discussion of constraints as experienced by tourists. Here, the evidence shows that, although tourists are restricted by economic factors, constraints relating to availability and access and cognitive structures are equally relevant, while the role of family status is shown to be particularly significant for tourists travelling with children.

7.2 Constraints relating to food and tourism providers

Constraints had a major impact on nearly all the providers interviewed for this study. In total, all 16 food and tourism experts referred to constraining factors, with 13 of the 17 food producers, and 20 of the 24 café and restaurant owners agreeing with this view. Their concerns centred around three primary factors: constraints relating to political structures, constraints relating to structures of availability and access, and constraints relating to economic structures. These factors are discussed separately for clarity of explanation. However, it is impossible to separate them entirely because they also intersect with each other, and I have therefore tried to highlight these interactions as they occur. Differences between the various types of providers, as well as between the Exmoor and Lake District interviewees, are also highlighted throughout the discussion.

7.2.1 Structures relating to political factors

In relation to political structures, the providers highlighted two main types of constraint – those relating to legislation and those relating to a lack of coordination between the various administrative bodies involved in the food and tourism industries. Eleven of the 57 providers, eight of whom were food

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producers or café/restaurant owners, felt constrained by what they saw as unhelpful, or excessively bureaucratic legislation. For example, P17 (50s, male, trout farmer, Exmoor) had been farming trout for more than 20 years. Over this period of time, he felt that the pressure to adhere to a variety of standards had increased dramatically in a way that was proving increasingly costly for small producers.

> *"It is all expensive – bureaucracy costs more and more and more. And you do wonder sometimes at the end of the day – you have to give yourself a slap on the face and say 'yes, I am actually fish farming, not doing paperwork!'"*

This example demonstrates that constraints are not straightforward because, for P17, political factors overlapped with, and intensified, the kind of economic restrictions which will be described in Section 7.2.3. Geographical factors which, as I will argue later, should be seen as a secondary constraint (p.317), were also important, as P17 compared his situation unfavourably with that of rival trout farmers operating in countries where the legislation was not so strict.

> *"There are many countries where fish come from – if you went up to them and said 'what volume is your extraction licence for?' they would say 'what's an extraction licence?' You know? You've got all these bureaucratic burdens and they haven't… You're competing against countries, even in Europe, that aren't on a level playing field."*

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Legislative factors are important because they affect what a business is allowed to do, and how it is allowed to do it, and this can have serious cost implications, particularly if extra equipment or monitoring systems are required. However, although producers and restaurateurs blamed the policy makers for creating such legislation, they did not appreciate that the policy makers themselves felt equally constrained.

For example, E11 (40s, male, food policy maker, central government) explained that, as a result of European legislation relating to state aid, there were clear limits to the degree of financial and legislative support that the government was able to give the local food industry.

> *"It* [state aid rules] *affects all sectors, from whether we were allowed to give extra money to Rover* [car manufacturer]*, to food and farming as well! And basically it lists certain things that you can't do if you're using state money to do it. In relation to what we do, you can't say that British food is best, or that food from Cumbria is better than food from Brittany or whatever. We can use public money to go to France and say how wonderful our food is – from an exporting point of view, it's fine. And that's why we get producers saying 'well, the Spanish and the Italians are doing it – why can't we do it?' But of course those tend to be promotions in the supermarkets promoting Italian food…"*

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Thus the producers' insistence that the experts and policy makers were being deliberately unhelpful was an oversimplification of the situation, because the policy makers themselves were also constrained by conflicts with other levels of policy. In addition to constraints imposed by European legislation, all three of the policy makers interviewed felt hampered by a lack of coordination between the plethora of administrative bodies involved in local food and tourism at various different scales. Coordination problems appeared to be operating at all levels, from the difficulties of ensuring that central government policy complemented more regional initiatives, as described by E11, to the problem of ensuring that the various regional food groups and tourist boards worked together at the local level. For example, E14 (40s, male, food policy maker, South West) felt that the proliferation of different administrative bodies working with food and tourism initiatives was a bonus because he thought that each of these groups was able to target a slightly different audience and perform a slightly different function. However, he admitted that there were problems coordinating these groups because: *"The downside is that it's very difficult to get a common approach for the whole sector, because everybody has their own opinions"*.

7.2.2 Structures relating to availability and access

Providers also recognised two principal constraints relating to the availability of local food. Firstly, it appeared to be physically impossible to find certain products locally and, secondly, for products that were available, it was often difficult to obtain a consistent and regular supply of the quantities desired at competitive prices.

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Physical availability proved particularly problematic for café and restaurant owners, as this group accounted for eight of the 11 providers who said they were unable to find required ingredients locally. For example, R9 (40s, male, vegetarian hotel owner, Lake District) supported the local food movement in principle but could not source many ingredients locally because fruit and vegetables were not readily available in Cumbria.

> *"This local thing is hard… there's a lot of meat and fish – OK, you can get them local – but in the vegetarian line, nobody in Cumbria grows vegetables, virtually. It's hopeless."*

In R9's case, the availability problem was two-fold, because he also supported the organic food movement and wanted to make this an additional feature of his hotel. However, he was unable to do so because it was hard to find organic produce in Cumbria. Again, these structural constraints of availability were overlain by economic and geographical constraints, as R9's remote location meant that any food he sourced was at what he described as *"premium price"*. He had visited Manchester's food markets previously, where ingredients were much cheaper. However, as he was unable to travel to Manchester on a regular basis, he had to pay the higher prices demanded by suppliers in Cumbria.

R9's example shows that availability is segmented by product, with locally-grown fruit and vegetables proving much harder to source than local meats.

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P = Interviews with food producers

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Three additional Lake District interviewees, R4, E1 and E13, reported the same problem, while R3 (40s, female, smart restaurant owner, Exmoor) felt that Exmoor was also experiencing a shortage of locally-grown fruit and vegetables.

Pre-prepared items also proved difficult to source locally. Five café and restaurant owners whose businesses relied upon a high proportion of ready-made ingredients explained that they had to source these items through a national company because local producers were not making these goods. As R20 (30s, male, fish-and-chip-shop owner, Lake District) explained:

> *"For a fish-and-chip-shop, the local ingredients are not here. What's here for a fish-and-chip-shop? I think the most local thing you could probably get is the fish from Fleetwood and, I think sometimes that's probably not the best – the fish is better from Aberdeen."*

Constraints of availability thus reflect the directions that the local food sectors have taken in Cumbria and Exmoor, with availability being differentiated by product type. Although there are small variations between the two study regions – cheese and dairy products, for example, are more prevalent on Exmoor, while brewing is more developed in the Lake District – the local food sector in both areas has been led by meat and bakery products, along with confectionery and preserves – all of which are easily produced given local environmental conditions. As the local food industry continues to grow, it may expand to encompass a wider range of products and a greater degree of

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secondary processing. However, even if this expansion does take place, it seems improbable that the sector could ever offer the range and – more crucially – the prices available through the more conventional route of national and international suppliers (see Section 7.2.3). Thus, for those wanting particular kinds of products, physical availability will continue to act as a constraint for the foreseeable future.

However, even when products were available, there remained problems accessing them. Delivery was identified as a problem by eight providers – six of whom were expert interviewees who had been working to remedy some of the issues involved. They explained that small, winding roads dominate both the Lake District and Exmoor, making delivery time-consuming and costly. As E9 (40s, male, regional food group representative, South West) explained:

> *"Effective distribution has been a huge, huge issue for us down in the South West – it might be a lovely place but it's a real challenge in that it's a long way from Cornwall to Swindon, and both are in our area! So to get products to market is quite a job…"*

However, a further 14 providers – comprising five producers, seven café/restaurant owners and two experts, also identified problems relating to consistency of supply. Here, there was a different emphasis between the producers and the café/restaurant owners, with the latter appearing fearful of a shortfall in supply, and the former explaining the difficulties involved in maintaining a consistent volume of production. In fact, both problems related

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to two factors: firstly, difficulties of scale and, secondly, the existence of natural variability.

In relation to scale, there was a conflict between the level of production required by commercial eating establishments and the scale of production that was possible for local producers. This was particularly problematic for businesses catering for large numbers of customers. For example, R19 (30s, male, fish-and-chip shop owner, Exmoor) admitted that the main thing preventing him from sourcing locally was his need for large quantities of fish.

> *"I don't think I've ever been approached by a local fish supplier. I know local fish suppliers exist – I know there's one in Barnstaple that sells a lot of lobster and crab and stuff like that – all the speciality fish. But, as far as cod's concerned, if you said to them how much fish you use a year and could they supply you with fresh fish, they'd probably run a mile!"*

At the other end of the scale, R2 (20s, male, traditional country-house hotel, marketing manager, Lake District) was experiencing similar problems. Despite enjoying considerable success with local sourcing, his hotel's prestigious restaurant was being constrained by a shortage of quality local produce. As a restaurant with an excellent reputation for its food, price was not an issue because the hotel's clientele were willing to pay for high quality ingredients. Encouraging local producers to expand production would therefore seem to be the obvious solution. However, there was a contradiction here because, in R2's mind, local produce was of such high quality because it

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was the result of a small-scale production process. Therefore, he was concerned that attempts to expand production would lead to a drop in quality. The solution was thus an expansion in the <u>number</u> of producers, rather than expansion by existing producers.

This evidence suggests that there is a mismatch between the scale of production required by larger eating establishments, and the scale of production that is possible by local producers, and the result is further constraints on availability. It may be possible for local producers to expand production to a certain extent, but R2's comments, as well as people's views concerning the small-scale, 'caring' nature of the local food industry (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001, Boniface, 2003), suggest that this is not always practical or desirable. This illustrates the way in which quality is considered to be related, not just to the nature of the raw ingredients or the production methods employed, but also to the personal skills of the producer (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000). The demand for a high level of involvement from the producer thus makes it very hard for a business to expand production while also retaining consumer confidence in the quality of the product.

There is also a mismatch in terms of the consistency required by eating establishments and the consistency that it is possible for local producers to provide. For example, R17's café (30s, male, visitor attraction café owner, Lake District) had made a point of promoting its local sourcing policy to customers by specifying the provenance of ingredients on the menu. He

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therefore found it irritating on occasions when his suppliers ran out of local products and tried to replace them with a non-local 'equivalent'.

However, although producers were aware that their customers wanted consistency, they were unable to eradicate the constraints imposed by natural variability. Cheese producers P6 (50s, female, cheese producer, Lake District) and P12 (40s, female, cheese producer, Exmoor) explained that handmade cheese was inevitably subject to variations in taste and, despite the best intentions of the producer, some batches had to be thrown away. However, the best example concerned the jam producers. P15 (30s, female, jam producer, Exmoor) had decided to embrace seasonality by using only fresh, local fruit and, because her business was relatively small-scale, she was able to accommodate seasonal changes relatively easily. However, P7's business (30s, male, jam producer, Lake District) had expanded in recent years and, as a result, he had decided to move from using locally-grown fruit and vegetables to using a national supply company because he wanted to provide his customers with year-round consistency.

Thus constraints result from the fact that nature is variable, and local producers therefore adopt a flexible approach which accepts that, when dealing with natural products, yields will vary throughout the year. However, consumers have become used to having access to products all year round, and the growth of large companies that can provide a continuous supply of ingredients from all over the world means that many shops, cafés and restaurants also have businesses that are based on consistency. The

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inflexible requirements of these eateries are therefore incompatible with the variable nature of local food production. This problem is not necessarily insurmountable because, as I will explain, some eateries have adopted strategies that enable them to cope with variability. However, as R19's (30s, male, fish-and-chip shop owner, Exmoor) example shows, not all businesses are able to be so flexible. Consequently, the mismatch between the consistency required by the eating establishment and the inconsistent nature of local food production can act as a major constraint.

7.2.3 Constraints relating to economic structures

Providers identified two main kinds of economic constraint – those relating to the pricing of local food products, and those relating to production costs. Concerns relating to the price of local food products were highlighted by 12 providers, comprising six café and restaurant owners, five experts and one food producer. For example, R13 (40s, male, upmarket café owner, Lake District) explained that he was willing to pay more for some products in order to support local producers. However, there were limits to which he could do this because of the costs involved: *"you cannot be buying-in products that are costing you three times as much just because they are local"*.

The key issue here is one of profit margins. Although astute café and restaurant owners may be able to charge their customers slightly more for a high quality local product (see p.314), there remains a ceiling beyond which consumers will be unwilling, or unable, to pay. At this point, the café or restaurant owner may decide to accept a cut in margin in order to support a

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local producer. However, because the business must make a certain degree of profit in order to remain viable, there comes a point when even the most passionate supporter of local food will have to find a cheaper supplier. These arguments may seem to be a straightforward matter of economics. However, as Section 7.5 will explain, the extent to which a business is affected by pricing constraints is strongly influenced by secondary factors relating to the location and nature of the business. For example, the constraints experienced by a busy café at a prime tourist site will be very different to those experienced by a Michelin-starred restaurant located in an exclusive hotel.

Despite this, conflict remains between café and restaurant owners and food producers because, while the former are constrained by what they consider to be excessively elevated prices, the latter are equally constrained by the high costs of production, meaning that they cannot afford to lower their prices to the level desired by their customers.

Ten providers – eight of who were food producers – identified constraints relating to production costs. They cited three main reasons for high production costs; the first of which was competition from abroad. Although it could be argued that UK producers have additional constraints imposed by legislation (see P17's comments, p.297), the main difference appeared to be that labour costs were greater in the UK. Without exception, the local food producers interviewed for this study had businesses that were very labour intensive, and this made it very hard for them to compete with countries where labour was cheaper.

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For example, E14 (40s, male, food policy maker, South West) felt that UK food producers must constantly strive to innovate and develop niche products because, once the rest of the world became interested in these products, they would always be able to produce them more cheaply.

> *"The only way you can compete with the rest of the world on commodity-based products, is on price. And the UK will lose every time, purely because of the labour costs and the cost of fuels in the UK. We will never be able to compete with the lower cost areas like Poland and China and all the various emerging ones. So I think we have to accept that we can't compete with those and* [we need to] *look at the niche product development* [instead]*."*

A second problem was the inability of small businesses to be flexible with the costs of production. This was why interviewees were wary of becoming too involved with supermarkets and larger supply companies, as P17 (50s, male, trout farmer, Exmoor) discovered when he tried to supply a large processor that supplied the supermarkets.

> *"Things were absolutely cut to the bone. There's economies of scale, see – you're selling massive quantities of fish, but you reach a point when – it's a bit like having a Morris Minor and trying to do 150 miles an hour in it! You then come to a point where you're devoting so much time just to growing the fish and looking after them…"*

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P = Interviews with food producers

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Such examples show that structures relating to politics, access and economics have a major impact upon the extent to which the local food and tourism industries are able to benefit from each other. However, although constraints are important, they are not the full story because tourists and providers are resourceful, adaptable individuals – often with strong personal beliefs about what they consider to be 'right' or desirable. Further analysis revealed that these beliefs were leading providers to use their own agency in order to mediate the effects of some of these constraints, as the following sections explain.

7.3 The importance of personal beliefs for providers

Interviews showed that three kinds of belief were encouraging providers to find ways of resisting the constraints identified above: a belief in the economic importance of the local food sector; a desire for personal satisfaction in the workplace; and a moral conviction that the local food sector should be supported for social and environmental reasons.

For example, 11 of the 57 providers explained that they would continue trying to support the local food sector, despite the constraints outlined above, because they felt it was important to help the economy of the area where they worked. As R5 (30s, female, smart restaurant owner, Lake District) explained:

> *"I'd rather pay a little bit more so that everybody gets their bit. So I'd*
>
> *rather pay £60 or £70 for a nice Herdwick lamb, rather than the farmer*

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P = Interviews with food producers

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taking it to market and maybe getting £30. So everybody's winning then… It's also keeping the local economy going as well, so that everybody earns their fair whack. But that's just my personal view – it's probably not everybody's."

However, there was also evidence of deeper-seated beliefs relating, firstly, to moral imperatives for supporting the local food sector and, secondly, to the importance of personal satisfaction in the workplace. For example, 18 providers felt that participation in alternative food networks could yield social or environmental benefits. These benefits ranged from higher standards of animal welfare to reduced food miles and increased social cohesion as a result of renewed connections between producer and consumer (Marsden, 2004, Boniface, 2003).

P14 (50s, female, meat producer, Exmoor) was a good example of a producer whose personal values encouraged her to challenge the structural constraints that she faced. Despite facing considerable financial hardships, she had persisted with her business due to a belief in the importance of the local food sector.

"If I had had a huge great loan to set it up, I think we would have gone under by now... And all we're trying to do is just make a living, keep our pigs – keep an old breed going – but it's been at a great financial cost to [name] and I because we've made a loss every year bar one, and we've piled money in. But we've kept a lot of people employed, I believe in the

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> *local food issue, and I… do genuinely believe – because of the way*
>
> *we've moved it around – it is going to go right."*

P14's persistence in the face of serious financial difficulties emphasises that constraints need not be the deciding factor, because those with strong beliefs will often be prepared to face considerable adversity in order to adhere to a course of action that they consider morally right. This may also explain why 23 providers supported the local food sector because they felt their work offered a high degree of personal satisfaction. As R7 (40s, male, smart restaurant owner, Lake District) explained:

> *"There's more enjoyment out of walking out that door at night, knowing that*
>
> *I've just done 30 people that have all really enjoyed it, than walking out the*
>
> *door having done 90 with lots more money in my till, knowing that I've had*
>
> *people walk out. I'd rather go home satisfied that we've had a good*
>
> *evening. And the money is secondary, to be honest. So it is about that*
>
> *pride and it's about the personal pride in the chef."*

These examples are important because they illustrate that business decisions are not made solely on the basis of constraints. Further analysis revealed that, as a result of such beliefs, interviewees were using their agency to develop ways of reducing the impacts of the primary structural constraints identified in Section 7.2. Their ability to do this depended on the extent to which these primary constraints were affected by secondary constraints relating to geographical and temporal factors, as well as the nature of the business, as the following sections discuss.

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7.4 A tale of two economies?

The evidence presented in Section 7.2 shows that structures relating to politics, economics and accessibility factors can restrict the kinds of activities that are possible and desirable for a business owner. For example, we have seen that, while the 'conventional' sector operates inflexibly and demands a consistent, reliable supply of product at low prices, production in the 'local' food sector is inherently variable, with prices remaining high. We might, therefore, expect café and restaurant owners to reject local products in favour of cheaper, more reliable, 'conventional' sources as a result of the discrepancies shown in Table 10.

Table 10. The 'local' and 'conventional' food sectors

The 'local food' sector	The 'conventional food' sector
High production costs result in more expensive products	Demands low-cost products to maximise profit margins
Small-scale, low-volume production process involving a large number of suppliers	Requires large-scale, high-volume production – preferably from one or two major supply companies
Nature is variable and supply is inconsistent throughout the year	Demands consistency of supply throughout the year
Competition based on quality	Competition based on price

Table 10 implies that we can identify a 'local' food sector which is separate from, and fundamentally incompatible with, the requirements of what we might term the 'conventional' food sector. However, closer inspection of the practices carried out by interviewees shows that this is an oversimplification of the situation. In contrast to the kind of clear-cut distinction that is implied by Table 10, Whatmore and Thorne (1997) and Watts et al (2005) have argued that it is impossible to separate the 'local' and 'conventional' sectors because

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of the ways in which the two overlap, and this research confirms and develops these findings by showing that these 'sectors' are not mutually exclusive. For example, as Section 7.3 showed, many of the providers interviewed for the study held strong personal beliefs about the importance of the local food sector. These beliefs encouraged them to find creative ways of working that enabled them to challenge the restrictions imposed by structures, with the result that certain 'alternative' practices could be included in their business alongside more 'conventional' strategies in ways that were both profitable and practical.

This is best illustrated with some examples. Of the 24 café and restaurant owners interviewed, 16 had made deliberate efforts to source some products locally, with only eight interviewees saying that they did not do so. For example, R5 (30s, female, smart restaurant owner, Lake District) was a skilled cook who believed in supporting local and organic produce. She admitted that it was impossible to get a consistent, year-round supply of ingredients from her local suppliers. However, instead of seeing this variability as a constraint, she saw it as an opportunity to be creative and change the menu in order to keep things interesting for customers. Thus, instead of fixing her menu <u>before</u> looking for suppliers, she would adapt her menu to what was seasonally available.

> *"Every week, we talk to our different suppliers and we find out what they have coming in, or what is in at the time, and then we just do our menu from that, really… It's like, with Valentine's Day, I know it's only next*

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Tuesday, but we still don't know what the menu is going to be – it all depends what sort of fish comes in!" R5 (30s, female, smart restaurant owner, Lake District).

Changing the menu in response to supply was therefore one way in which producers could work with the structures of availability to turn a constraint into an opportunity. A similar tactic was employed in relation to economic constraints, as café and restaurant owners revealed that, although local products were more expensive to buy, they could also be used to attract customers by making a business appear more distinctive (Bourdieu, 1984). Costs could then be passed on to the consumer because tourists seeking a higher quality, more distinctive food experience were willing to pay more for local products that were perceived to be tastier, higher quality and different to those on offer elsewhere, as R11's comments (40s, female, farm tearoom owner, Lake District) show:

> *"It costs more to use local ingredients – there's no doubt about that – but what I see is an advantage at the other end in that we're busier – that's the way I'm marketing the business as being what it is and on the fact that local produce and local dishes are an integral part of who we are and what we do. And people like it, and people come back and return for it so, while costs might be higher, I believe that I'm getting a better return."*

These examples show that the 'local' and 'conventional' food sectors are not separate entities because it <u>is</u> possible to work with the constraints imposed

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by structure so that some elements of 'alternativeness' can be introduced alongside more 'conventional' strategies. Therefore, rather than viewing the 'local' and 'conventional' as binary opposites, we should look beyond such simplistic dualisms to the ways in which different kinds of production and retailing practices can be combined in particular kinds of circumstances (Watts *et al.*, 2005, Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). However, my research also shows that businesses do not have complete freedom of choice in terms of the strategies that they decide to develop. This is because, in addition to the three primary structural constraints discussed in Section 7.2, it is possible to identify a number of secondary constraints that impact upon a proprietor's ability to incorporate particular practices, as I shall now discuss.

7.5 Secondary constraints

Detailed analysis of café and restaurant owners' comments revealed that their ability to utilise local foods successfully was further affected by secondary constraints relating to three additional factors: the nature of the business (for example, café, pub or restaurant), its geographical location, and temporal constraints imposed by the seasonal nature of tourism. I refer to these factors as secondary constraints because they act to exacerbate, or reduce, the impact of the primary constraints discussed in Section 7.2. For example, 12 of the 24 proprietors interviewed indicated that their ability to use local food was influenced by the nature of the business they were running. R11 (40s, female, farm tearoom owner, Lake District) felt that using local ingredients made her tearoom more distinctive (p.314). However, she admitted that it was difficult to include some of the more expensive local products on the menu at a realistic

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price because there were limits to what consumers would pay in a tearoom environment:

> *"You can charge a little bit more for it but I think that there's a threshold beyond which people feel uncomfortable about paying, or that a tearoom isn't the right environment for them to pay more than £2.55 for a bowl of soup, even though someone's in the kitchen and has hand-peeled those vegetables that morning. They'd pay more if they were in a restaurant environment and they were getting that quality, but I have noticed that you can only push price so far."*

Her comments were echoed by R8 (40s, male, Italian restaurant owner, Exmoor), whose restaurant focused on providing reasonably priced pizza and pasta dishes for tourists and locals alike. R8 was not a trained chef and, consequently, he needed a lot of pre-prepared ingredients to produce his food. He felt that his reputation for providing quick and tasty dishes at economical prices restricted his ability to use local food, as he explained when contrasting his situation with that of another local restaurant that was famous for the high quality of its food.

> *"Our locals, they like the pizzas… If they want to eat posh, or eat a sort of bistro-type meal, they will go to* [name of smart local restaurant]*… So really, for us, local food is not as important as it is for some of the bigger, posher places."*

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Therefore the nature of a business can restrict a proprietor's ability to source locally, principally through the relative willingness of its clientele to pay a premium for local provenance. This is because, for businesses operating in the more economical, less prestigious part of the eating-out market, the economic constraints outlined in Section 7.2.3, which result in local products costing more, effectively intersect with social and economic constraints acting on the tourist. As Section 7.6.2 will explain, consumers are also limited in terms of what they are able and willing to pay, and this will impact upon the eating establishments that they visit. Consequently, if a business wishes to make a success of local sourcing, it must make itself sufficiently distinctive in order to secure the custom of those who, as described by Bourdieu (1984), are willing and able to pay the higher prices involved.

Geographical factors can also have an impact on a business's ability to source locally. Of the 57 providers interviewed, 13 felt that location had a role to play, even on a very local scale. This was because the presence of rival local businesses, or the high rents charged in prime tourist areas could make it difficult for proprietors to source locally, as R20 (30s, male, fish-and-chip-shop owner, Lake District) explained. R20's business was located in the heart of a prime Lake District tourist town and, consequently, he was paying very high rates for the premises. He was also surrounded by a number or rival tourist cafés, all of whom were competing on price. As a result, he described his business strategy as *"profit, profit, profit"*:

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R20: The overheads around here are so high. You've got to have the profit margin to… I think you'll find our rates are more than Lancaster city centre and places like that…

RS: I suppose if you've got to be here, you've got to make it count?

R20: Yes, you have. That's it. I think that's why there's a lot of different sorts of – pizzas – there's a high profit margin in, Chinese – high profit margin. When you look round [place name]*, there's quite a few.*

However, regional differences were also evident, with smarter restaurants being affected too. R9 (40s, male, vegetarian hotel owner, Lake District) would have been able to access much cheaper ingredients for his vegetarian restaurant if he had lived in Manchester (p.300). Equally, R5 (30s, female, smart restaurant owner, Lake District) felt that her Cumbrian location prevented her from charging prices that would be feasible in London.

"Round here you can only charge so much. If you were down in London and you had a fillet steak that was organic, then you might pay £30-£40 for it. You couldn't charge that, round here. So that's what my first bug-bear was when we first started. I know that the suppliers have tried hard and that they have to make their profit, but it's like I said – literally, a piece of fillet steak, what they were selling it to me – I couldn't sell it out."

There were also differences between the Lake District and Exmoor. Slightly more Lake District businesses considered tourism to be very important to their business – nine café and restaurant owners and five food producers felt this

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way, as opposed to figures of six and three for Exmoor businesses. This was supported by the fact that all three of the providers who felt that tourism did not make a significant contribution to their businesses came from Exmoor.

Exmoor interviewees were also more concerned about temporal constraints resulting from the seasonality of tourism: four of the six providers who considered seasonality to be problematic came from Exmoor. As R8 (40s, male, Italian restaurant owner, Exmoor) explained:

"In the summer, there's enough people to keep you going, but it's just the winter – there's not enough business in the winter because it's not – Exmoor's not the place – you've got to want to come here. The Lakes, you've got the M6 going straight past. Just come off at Kendal, come off at Penrith, you're in there. And it's also – it's got the grandeur of the mountains, it's got the lakes, it's got far more going for it. I mean, Exmoor's beautiful – it's the most fantastic place to live – we've got better wildlife here than any other national park in Britain, apart from the Scottish ones. So we've got our own selling points. But it's never going to be the Lake District."

This is not to say that seasonality was unimportant for the Lake District. As R4 (40s, female, upmarket restaurant owner, Lake District) told me: *"anybody can make money in the summer, but it's the winter months that you've really, really got to work through".* However, the preceding evidence, in tandem with the key visitor statistics (see footnotes below) shows that the Lake District is at a

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more advanced stage of tourism development than Exmoor. This could be acting to constrain the development of Exmoor's local food industry, because visitor numbers are not high enough to provide a sustained market for distinctive local products – particularly during the winter[16] and the local population is not large or affluent enough to support the local food industry on its own (p.98)[17].

Therefore, although any café or restaurant can, in theory, make a success of local sourcing, the secondary constraints described here make it hard for many proprietors to adapt in this way. This is because these secondary constraints intersect with the primary constraints described in Section 7.2 to increase, or decrease, the limitations on a business. For example:

- Geographical location can intersect with primary constraints relating to economics and access, so that it becomes harder for a business in a remote location to source ingredients at reasonable prices.

- The nature of a business can intersect with economic constraints so that a café, for example, may find it harder to source more expensive local ingredients because there is a limit to how much consumers will pay in an informal dining environment (p.316).

- Seasonality can intersect with economic constraints as businesses struggle to attract sufficient numbers of customers during winter.

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[16] Cumbria received 15.17 million visitors in 2006, whereas only 1.2 million visitor nights were spent on Exmoor in 2000 (Chapter 3.3, p.97).
[17] Exmoor has a population of just 10,500 and the average weekly earning for a full-time male is £304 – less than 80 per cent of the UK average. By contrast, the Lake District has a population of over 40,000 and the average weekly earning for a full-time male is £422.15 (Chapter 3.3).

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Consequently, the extent to which a business is able to make a success of local sourcing will depend, not just on the proprietor adopting a suitable business strategy, but also on factors relating to geography, seasonality and the nature of the business.

As I have illustrated, these factors are important because they impact upon the type and volume of customers that a business is able to attract. There is therefore a reciprocal relationship between an eating establishment and its customers, so that a business can be constrained or enabled by its clientele, just as a tourist can be constrained or enabled by the foods on offer at the destination. Therefore, if we are to understand the relationship between tourists and eating establishments, we must also analyse the ways in which tourists can be constrained, as the following sections discuss.

7.6 Constraints on tourist behaviour

The evidence suggests that constraints should be seen as one of the universal experiences of tourism. From a total of 107 interviewees, 71 reported having their holidays constrained in some way by factors beyond their control. The main findings concerned constraints relating to the following: availability and access; cognitive structures; economic factors, and, finally, family status. While all tourists were affected by the first three factors to a greater or lesser extent, constraints relating to family status affected only those travelling with children. However, although restrictions relating to children affected less than one fifth of the tourists interviewed (p.330), I would argue that the impact of this constraint was particularly severe. As a result, it

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had more effect on the holiday for tourists travelling with children than the impacts of the first three factors combined, as the following sections describe.

7.6.1 Structures relating to availability and access

Constraints relating to availability and access were not only important to providers. Twenty of the 107 tourist interviewees also reported having little or no choice in relation to their holiday foods and drinks because their preferred choices were unavailable. However, the extent to which a lack of availability was considered problematic depended primarily on what products and services were considered desirable by the tourists. For example, eight interviewees complained that they were prevented from trying more local speciality foodstuffs because these specialities were not readily available at their destination. H34's experience (party of 2, Exmoor, smart hotel) was typical of this:

> *"We went to Majorca four years ago, and we were absolutely astounded because all you could have where we were staying was fish-and-chips and roast beef – which we didn't want. There was only one restaurant in the town that did Spanish food, so we went there. So, I mean, we used to drive out of an evening and find that because, personally, if I'm going abroad, I want to try what the locals eat – I don't want to eat fish-and-chips – I can have that at home… But unfortunately, there are certain areas where that's all you do get."*

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In this case, the group was able to drive to a place where they could find the 'local' cuisine that they wanted. However, other tourists staying at the resort might not have had access to a car, and would have had to make do with fish-and-chips because this was all that was available. Time constraints are also a factor, because not every tourist would have been willing to make the effort to drive to a different town every night. This supports research conducted for the Countryside Agency (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001), which indicated that the majority of tourists exhibited an opportunist attitude to local foods – most were happy to try them, but they had to be easily available. Unlike H34, X2 (30s, male, professor, Bath University) was not prepared to spend too much time searching for local products: *"It's always got to be an easy find. I wouldn't work too hard at finding excellent food".* His comments were echoed by H56 (party of 2, Lake District, day visitors), who explained that there was not always time to seek out local products within the holiday.

Constraints relating to availability were also problematic for vegetarians, or those wanting to adhere to certain principles of eating or shopping. For example, H5 (party of 3, Exmoor, youth hostelling) did not enjoy eating out in the UK because they felt that, in most cases, the quality of the food on offer did not live up to the environmental and health principles that they would follow at home.

> *H5(2): There's only certain ranges of things that you can get out* [i.e. away from home]*, and we know jolly well that the chicken, if we're served*

it, is not going to be free-range, unless it's very exceptional

circumstances.

H5(3): Yes – it troubles me a bit, because I did have it the other day.

H5(2): Salmon is invariably going to be farmed in some poisonous

Scottish loch – you see how bitterly cynical we are! And the eggs aren't

going to be organic or anything like that, or free-range.

H5(3): We'd never have battery hen eggs, would we?

However, for four tourists, the problem was not poor quality, mass-produced food or the lack of local specialities. Instead, these more cautious eaters felt constrained by the reverse scenario where only local specialities were available, as X21 (20s, female, administration assistant, Lancaster University) explained of her holiday to Italy:

"I didn't feel like you had much choice over there because you can go

abroad – you can go to Spain or you can go to Greece – everywhere's

got chicken and chips on the menu or burger on the menu or something

quite plain, whereas with Italy, it was very different, you know? There

was Italian food on the menu and that was about it, so you had to like it

or you were stuck really."

This re-iterates the fact that constraints are rarely straightforward in nature. Although these examples relate, on one level, to availability, they are also linked to personal preferences and the kind of cognitive structures discussed in Section 7.6.2. X21, for example, described herself as a "fussy eater" who

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was wary of unfamiliar foods. She therefore felt constrained by the abundance of local foods in Italy, whereas H34, who had been looking forward to trying Majorcan delicacies, felt constrained by the lack of them.

However, preferences aside, the fact remains that certain foods are more prevalent in some areas than others. Tourists can only select from the range of foods and drinks that are physically available at the destination and therefore they rarely have complete freedom to choose their food. If researchers do not take availability into account, they risk assuming that tourists are deliberately selecting certain foods or drinks. While this may be the case for some holidaymakers, we must not forget that, due to structural constraints regarding availability, others may be eating from necessity rather than choice.

Availability also has an access dimension that requires consideration. For example, 11 of the 107 tourists stated that, although local foods were available, they felt constrained by structures relating to their own social and cultural attributes that adversely influenced their ability to access these products and services. X23 (30s, female, secretary, Lancaster University) had experienced these problems when on honeymoon in Cyprus:

> *"We probably could have found more Greek-type places if we'd gone off into a few more back streets, but I wasn't really brave enough to do that – you know, when you're abroad and you don't speak the language…"*

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Thus availability is complex – just because a particular food or type of establishment is available does not necessarily mean that we will be in a position to take advantage of it, and it is for this reason that Cohen and Avieli (2004) have argued for the importance of mediation strategies, such as menu translation, at restaurants in tourist resorts. Such strategies are intended to make the boundaries between the 'different' and the 'familiar' more permeable so that tourists are less likely to feel constrained by their lack of local knowledge. It could, of course, be argued that similar barriers also exist within English-language restaurants in the UK as a result of the trend for increasingly elaborate menu descriptions such as "pan-fried fillet of Grizedale venison with fig tart, sautéed savoy cabbage and pancetta, pomme Anna, red wine sauce" (Prelude Restaurant at The Wordsworth Hotel, 2006). Here, so much attention is given to the provenance of the ingredients and the style of preparation, that consumers may feel intimidated if they lack the culinary expertise required to decipher such descriptions.

Interestingly, although only 34 per cent of the 107 tourists interviewed had academic jobs (in the case of the staff interviews) or were staying in smart or luxury hotels (in the case of the current tourist interviews), 55 per cent of those who mentioned availability as a constraint came from this group, thus indicating that this issue was of more importance for tourists with greater financial and cultural resources. This could be because these interviewees are likely to have higher expectations of their holidays due to having had more experience of travel and eating out (see Chapter 4.2). Those with higher incomes will be able to afford a wider range of experiences and, consequently,

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they may be accustomed to a considerable degree of choice on their holidays. They are thus more likely to be critical of destinations where they did not enjoy the same high standards, or level of choice, as experienced elsewhere. By contrast, those with lower salaries may not be accustomed to having so much choice. As a result, they may be more willing to accept constraints as an inevitable part of the holiday.

Such findings suggest that constraints relating to economic factors and cognitive structures – such as those concerning taste (Bourdieu, 1984) – are equally important to tourists, as the following section describes.

7.6.2 Cognitive and economic structures

Further analysis revealed that, for the discerning tourist, there was a quality dimension to availability that was also important. For example, X18 (20s, male, lecturer, Lancaster University) explained that, as a vegetarian and a skilled cook, he preferred to self-cater when on holiday because: *"it's not just a case of not being able to get vegetarian food, it's a case of not being able to get high quality vegetarian food".* His comments were echoed by H73 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel) who stated: *"We also cook at home, so* [when on holiday] *we don't want to eat anything that's not any better than what we could do at home."*

Bourdieu's (1984) discussion of taste shows how the beliefs and understandings that we hold about ourselves and our position in the world can make us more likely to behave in certain ways. These tastes can therefore act

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as cognitive structures that will play a role in our decision-making. In the cases of X18 and H73 these cognitive structures acted as a constraint; because both interviewees considered mediocre food unacceptable, the choice of dishes available to them was effectively restricted further, albeit in two ways. One saved money by self-catering to obtain the quality he wanted, while the other went up-market, although neither was willing to compromise their self-image by accepting lower standards while on holiday.

Additional evidence showed cognitive structures were acting as a constraining influence in a range of circumstances, such as the example of H18 (party of 3, Exmoor, average hotel), an elderly lady who would not travel abroad now that her husband was dead. Also X21, as mentioned previously (p.324), admitted that her fear of 'different' foods made her wary of visiting destinations such as Thailand because she worried that there would be no familiar foods available.

In contrast to the macro-scale economic structures influencing the physical availability of certain cuisines, cognitive structures operate at the micro-scale of the individual. However, this does not mean that their role is any less significant. For the interviewees mentioned here, these cognitive structures had equal importance in terms of their constraining influence on holiday food behaviour.

In addition to cognitive structures, it is also important to recognise the extent to which tourists can be constrained by economic structures relating to income and costs. Ten tourists stated that their holiday choices were constrained by

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costs, with such constraints appearing more significant for lower income groups. For example, X25 (30s, male, porter, Lancaster University) wanted to try more local specialities when in Majorca but, because these proved too expensive, he ended up selecting more familiar options from the local Spar shop.

Thus those on lower incomes do not have the same degree of choice as their more affluent counterparts. This can be particularly problematic in relation to local foods which, as explained in Section 7.2.3, are also subject to economic constraints that make them more expensive. This point was illustrated by X17 (30s, male, professor, Lancaster University) who recalled the experience of being a parent while on a more meagre salary at the start of his career.

> *"High quality food, I think, should be more accessible to everyone, rather than having to make trade-offs like, you know, you go for a cheaper option for a family of six or five and you end up eating crap, basically – you know, chips and… And I always just think that these simple and very nice local foods should be more accessible, really. Which is what happens in places like New Zealand and Hawaii because the local people eat it. Whereas over here it's seen more as a speciality, I think, and then obviously there's a much higher price attached to it."*

In addition to cost constraints, X17's comments also raise the issue of family status and the impact that this can have on a person's holiday behaviour. In Chapter 5, I argued that the presence of children can act as a major

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constraint, and the following section develops this issue by arguing that family status has the potential to result in dramatic changes to a person's holiday behaviour.

7.6.3 Constraints relating to family lifecycle

In total, 20 of the 107 tourists explicitly stated that their holidays had been affected by the needs of the children. As H7 (party of 5, Exmoor, camping) explained: *"Kids totally change your outlook"*.

The presence of children had an impact in two main ways. Firstly, I encountered 12 tourists who claimed that the need to accommodate young children had affected the type of accommodation or the type of eating establishment they would select. For example, self-catering was felt to be cheaper for a family. It also enabled parents to be flexible with mealtimes and to incorporate familiar foods from home for the benefit of fussy eaters. Alternatively, parents reported choosing buffet-style restaurants where the children could select foods that they liked, before going back for more if necessary. Others would eat out at lunchtime and choose establishments that they considered to be child-friendly so that they would not feel embarrassed if their children were noisy or disruptive. H6's experience of a Thompson Holiday (party of 4, Exmoor, staying at Butlins) was typical of this:

> *"The buffet was great because they don't have to wait for their food, they can just go and get it – if they don't get very much, that's fine, they can survive to the next meal, and they can go and get more the next time...*

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They'd made out four or five dishes and, both times we've been, we've gone to the same hotel that's had that. And it was excellent, really good. Again, it's all about keeping these guys [the children] *happy. We're sort of secondary to the event, really!"*

However, an additional eight tourists had gone even further by changing the kind of vacation or the type of holiday activities selected in order to cater for children. For example, X1 (30s, female, lecturer, Bath University) and her husband now chose 'safer' holidays with set tours included whereas, before the children arrived, they preferred more independent, exploratory vacations. Equally H17 (party of 3, Exmoor, staying at Butlins) said that they had stopped going abroad after the birth of their son because they felt that the UK had more resorts offering children's activities.

However, most interesting of all were remarks such as those made by X2 (30s, male, professor, Bath University), which indicated that decisions regarding food would be made very differently when the children were not present.

X2: If I'm on holiday with the family, it's much harder to do it [choose a restaurant] *in a structured way – especially with the children... The normal routine would be we would go to a district that had restaurants, and we would look at some. My wife will decide she likes the look of that one – we'd look at a few menus outside and peer through the windows, and she will say 'this is the one'. And I will say 'absolutely fine, let's go'.*

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Because, by that time, we're probably pretty hungry and the kids are saying 'daddy, daddy, I want my hot dog or hamburger' or…

RS: Not keen on waiting?

X2: No. And getting to be a pain. And I'm usually carrying at least one of them! Now, if I was on my own, then things happen a bit differently. Especially if I'm with a group of colleagues – at a conference, for example – then we're more likely to use guide books, seek advice from people working in hotel receptions and, you know, we might then make a more informed choice.

X2's example shows how dramatically priorities can change when children are involved. We may compare his comments with those of H77 (party of 2, Lake District, luxury hotel), an older couple who explained that they liked eating out more now that their children were no longer at home, or the comments of H32 (party of 4, Exmoor, smart hotel), a group of self-confessed 'foodies' who were contemplating a reduction in their dining-out activities as a result of impending parenthood. Such a comparison shows that structural constraints relating to family status are of vital importance when interpreting the holiday food choices made by tourists. Indeed, I would argue that the changes brought about by children are of such a magnitude that they may well surpass constraints relating to availability and access, cognitive structures, and even economic factors, to become the dominant consideration for parents.

The evidence presented here indicates the existence of a family lifecycle whereby young single people or childless couples have a reasonably wide

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choice of holiday destinations and foods available to them, albeit within the constraints imposed by additional factors such as income or cognitive structures. However, once a couple decides to have children, they will almost certainly opt for 'safer', 'easier' foods and destinations as a result of the practical and economic constraints associated with children. Such constraints will lessen as the children become older and increasingly independent and, consequently, the couple may find that, as they move towards retirement, they are, once again, able to take advantage of more adventurous foods and destinations. This 'family lifecycle' is clearly not a perfect model of a person's holiday food behaviour because other constraints, such as those relating to income, age, health and personal preferences will also have an impact on the decision-making process. However, the idea of a cyclical progression is helpful because it encourages food and tourism researchers to consider the impact of structural factors relating to family status – a factor which is largely absent from the food and tourism literature.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised that constraints are an integral part of the holiday experience for providers and tourists alike. In doing so, it supports the work of authors such as Marsden (2004) and Ilbery *et al.* (2004), who have emphasised the role that economic, political and social structures can have on the decision-making process. Indeed, the fact that more than 90 per cent of providers and almost 70 per cent of tourists experienced constraints indicates that future studies must take structural factors into consideration.

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This conclusion is important for this study because it emphasises that, when attempting to understand the food and drink behaviour of tourists and providers, necessity – as well as choice – may be a driving factor. This is not to argue that structure is separate from, or more important than agency. Clearly, agency has a vital role to play – this chapter, for example, has shown how individuals can work creatively with structures in order to transform constraints into opportunities. Nor is it to argue that structures can only be constraining, because economic and social transformations have also created an environment in which the food and tourism industries can derive potential benefits from one another (Boniface, 2003).

However, this chapter shows that constraints are complex and overlapping for tourists and providers. For example, secondary constraints of geography and seasonality can overlap with primary constraints relating to politics, economics and accessibility to influence how severely providers are affected (p.320). Such interactions suggest that, rather than attempting to analyse the impacts of any one factor, researchers must adopt a holistic approach which takes account of the ways in which constraints are interlinked. As a result, an appreciation of context is also key, because small-scale variations – such as the location of a café or a tourist's family circumstances – can impact on the ways in which constraints are experienced and dealt with.

It is also important to recognise that the relationships between tourists and providers are interdependent. For example, just as a tourist's ability to choose will depend, in part at least, upon the foods and drinks made available by café

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and restaurant owners at the destination, so these café and restaurant owners are reliant upon receiving sufficient support from the right sort of consumers for the type of business that they wish to run. Equally, although there may be conflicts between the needs of local food producers and the needs of commercial eateries, the two are ultimately dependent upon each other for their success, because café and restaurant owners wishing to source locally can do so only if suitable products are available at the right price. Conversely, local producers may rely upon the support of café and restaurant owners for the success of their business.

Relationships between these actors can therefore be enabling or constraining. However, in relation to the present study, the key point is that the actions of tourists, café and restaurant owners, local food producers and food and tourism experts are intrinsically related to one another. For example, the opening of a new restaurant at a destination is likely to have an effect upon the owners of competing cafés and restaurants. However, the opening could also create opportunities for local food producers and attract new – perhaps different – tourists to the area. This, in turn, could have consequences for the future development of the destination. The existence of such interactions shows why it was important to interview throughout the food chain in order to answer the study's research questions. Such findings have implications for future food and tourism studies because they suggest that, rather than targeting particular groups in isolation, results can be improved by taking a holistic approach that includes a wider range of actors.

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Finally, the examples presented here provide a further illustration of how food choices can provide an insight into the ways in which we understand ourselves and others. Our personal values and beliefs exert a powerful influence over our choices in ways that can enable or constrain us. For example, producers' beliefs in the importance of local food economies can help them to persist with a business plan in the face of political or financial adversity. Conversely, fears about 'different' foods can severely constrain tourists' choices at destinations where there are few 'familiar' foods on offer. Researchers must therefore be aware that people's food choices have significance beyond that of simple refuelling or the maximisation of profit margins. Instead, they must remain alert to the ways in which such choices may indicate a person's position in relation to wider issues of place and self-identity, as the final chapter will describe.

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CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study has shown that understanding the role of holiday foods and drinks needs to go much further than seeing them as a simple process of refuelling. I have argued that, through their food and drink choices on holiday, tourists can gain a greater insight into the nature of a place, as well as a fuller sense of themselves and those around them. Those on the supply side – the producers and providers – can also use food to create social, economic and environmental benefits for themselves and their locality, in addition to gaining a heightened sense of self-fulfilment from their work.

This study's research aim was to identify and develop concepts which will help us better understand people's holiday food and drink choices. This aim had two components:

A) To investigate how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of place.

B) To investigate how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of ourselves and others.

In order to address these factors, the study had four detailed research questions that were pursued in the four analysis chapters. These research questions were as follows:

5) What role does food and drink play in the tourist experience?

(Chapter 4)

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6) How do people's holiday food and drink choices compare to the foods and drinks that they select at home? (Chapter 5)

7) What is the role of locality and authenticity in relation to holiday foods and drinks? (Chapter 6)

8) What impacts do structural constraints have on the holiday food sector? (Chapter 7)

This chapter addresses the study's main research aim by synthesising the findings from these four analysis chapters and relating them back to the two components of my research aim, as outlined above.

The chapter begins with a discussion of how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of place. It then addresses the second component of the study's research aim by discussing how our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of ourselves and others. I follow these sections by reviewing the role of my two case study areas within the research before going on to focus on the central research aim of the thesis. In this section, I propose four key themes that could help us better understand people's holiday food and drink choices. I also explain that, in order to gain the maximum benefit from these themes, two overarching concepts are particularly important. Firstly, there is a need to move beyond dichotomies to an approach based upon the use of spectra and, secondly, it is important to acknowledge the role of context in food and tourism research. The chapter then outlines this thesis's original contribution to knowledge, before concluding with a final section that highlights the practical implications of this study and which makes some recommendations for further research.

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8.2 How do our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of place?

In relation to place, the findings presented in Chapter 6.4 showed that many visitors feel a genuine desire to experience a sense of place while on holiday. This was reflected in a decision to try local foods that were considered to have 'authentic' links to the place and culture of the destination – either because they were perceived to be 'traditional' dishes of that region, or because they had been grown or produced there. However, this wish to experience place through food was by no means straightforward because of the myriad ways in which visitors and providers were socially constructing ideas about place, locality and authenticity for a range of purposes. I argue that attempts to define and represent these concepts invariably meet with disagreement because different definitions embody a host of values and assumptions that empower and include some actors and disempower and exclude others. This process was made clear by the insistence of P15 (30s, female, jam producer, Exmoor) that her products were more local than those of her competitors because they were made from locally-grown ingredients, rather than just being manufactured locally from imported ingredients (p.227). Other producers, such as P11 (40s, male, cider producer, Exmoor) went further by suggesting that 'genuine' local products should be 'traditional' foods and drinks with a long history of production within the area in question.

However, there is also an important element of social construction to people's thoughts about place. Place image is widely acknowledged as playing an essential role in tourism (Meethan, 2001, Bell and Valentine, 1997, Urry,

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1990) and this study confirmed these findings by showing how place image can be linked to food in powerful ways. In Chapters 4.2 and 6.3 I argued that our interaction with the foods of a particular destination begins long before we actually arrive, because our prior expectations may include thoughts about what kinds of food experiences we shall have there. These expectations are likely to influence the types of food experience that we shall seek – or seek to avoid – while on holiday. Such arguments support Urry's (1995) contention that day-dreaming and anticipation *"provide the signs in terms of which the holiday experiences are understood, so that what is then seen is interpreted in terms of these pre-given categories"* (Urry, 1995 p.132).

Foods and drinks can therefore act as symbols of place, and this – combined with their propensity to become associated with our personal memories of being in a place – can explain why they are so popular as souvenirs. This study also shows that the relationship between food and place is reciprocal because, just as foods can come to symbolise place, so place can also come to symbolise food. For example, Chapter 6.5 revealed that an effective marketing strategy for food producers in attractive rural areas is to emphasise the connections between the qualities of their food product and our thoughts about the place in which it was produced. In this way, astute marketing strategies can ensure that pure, clean images commonly associated with the Lake District or Exmoor can be transferred to the products produced there (p.244).

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Clearly, the demand for local food is not the only trend operating in holiday destinations. Evidence presented in Chapters 5.6 and 6.7 shows that tourists like to dip in and out of different kinds of food experience on holiday. There are therefore times in the holiday when an Indian or Chinese restaurant can prove just as appealing during a holiday in Britain as a Cumberland sausage or a cream tea. The menu analysis discussed in Chapter 6.6 also revealed that, in addition to local specialities, foods and culinary styles from other countries were also popular options for restaurateurs. In this chapter, I argued that attempts to draw a binary distinction between 'local' food, on the one hand, and 'global' food, on the other, are unhelpful because, on closer inspection, the two are interrelated – distinctive 'local' products can be sold and marketed throughout the world – while international restaurant chains such as McDonalds are increasingly trying to tailor their products and services to the local market – for example, by providing rice with meals in Thailand (Germann Molz, 2005).

Instead, I suggested that a more helpful distinction would be to examine the extent to which particular food products have meanings attached to them, in terms of their ability to make explicit the story about the people and places that produced them. For example, some products – such as Grasmere Gingerbread, French Brie or Italian prosciutto – are marketed in such a way that they retain this story of their origins, regardless of how 'globally' they are sold. By contrast, other products – such as the packaged ready-meal bought from a supermarket – remain largely silent about the place (or places) that produced them. However, while it could be argued that consumer concerns

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about quality and traceability are leading to increasing demands at home or on holiday for meaningful, place-specific foods, wherever they are from, the results of this study suggest that 'local' food has the potential to make a particularly significant contribution to tourism. This is because tourists on holiday are not just looking to connect with any kind of place. Instead, they want to experience the particular place that they are visiting and, by consuming foods and drinks that are considered 'local', they can feel a stronger sense of connection with that specific locality.

As discussed above, there is a strong element of social construction involved in the marketing of 'local' food and drink products. However, this is not to say that the local food industry itself is merely socially constructed. Chapters 6.8 and 7.3 show that the values and beliefs of some producers leads them to pursue particular practices that are different in many ways to those of their competitors (see p.288 and 309). This supports evidence presented by Marsden (2004) and Boniface (2003), who argue that the conventional and alternative sectors are characterised by differing economic, environmental and social practices. However, once again, the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 indicate that it is impossible to draw a complete distinction between these sectors, as there is a degree of overlap between them (Watts *et al.*, 2005, Watts *et al.*, 2007). This was particularly evident in Chapter 7.4, where café and restaurant owners showed a degree of flexibility in their engagement with different production and retailing strategies. However, although there was some compromise involved, the tourists and providers who wished to support 'local' products were passionate in their beliefs, and these beliefs translated

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into their shopping or business practices. As a result, I argued that, although our ideas about local food are socially constructed, the practices of production, processing and culinary tradition to which they refer are not. In short, there is a reality to places, their products, their histories and their actors' strategies, that goes beyond that of 'place image', and this is also evident from the role that context plays in the holiday food experience.

As Chapters 4.3 and 6.4 illustrate, the key to understanding why certain food experiences can prove so memorable or 'authentic', comes from the realisation that such experiences are about much more than just the physical taste of the products being consumed. Instead, I have argued that holiday food events should be seen as multi-dimensional experiences where factors such as the physical setting of the experience, the ambience of the restaurant, and the nature of one's dining companions all have a role to play in how the experience is interpreted by its participants (Chapter 4.3). For example, a cream tea that is eaten at home alone is a very different experience from a cream tea eaten in a rural Devon café with friends or family.

Warde and Martens (2000) have argued that an element of variety is an important component of an eating-out experience. They claim that this variety can be generated by events, because no two dining experiences are exactly the same. However, this study shows that a similar conclusion can be applied to holiday food events because it is *context* that provides this variety. Context includes, not just the physical aspects of the meal, but also the more intangible aspects of a person's thoughts and emotions at the time, and therefore it is impossible to replicate any eating experience in its entirety.

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Context or, more precisely, the absence of the original context, can thus explain why food souvenirs can prove disappointing when consumed at home, as outlined in Chapter 6.3.

Place is therefore important for tourists, because it helps create a context for a holiday food experience. It is also important for food producers and restaurateurs, albeit for different reasons. For example, in Chapter 7.5, I emphasised the importance of geographical location for a business by explaining how problems like high shop rents, increased costs of delivery or difficulty accessing a sufficient volume of customers could be exacerbated or ameliorated by the place in which the business was located. Place can thus exert a strong influence on how more general issues, such as supply arrangements or pricing structures, are worked out in practice at a specific location.

8.3 How do our holiday food and drink choices relate to our understanding of ourselves and others?

For both tourists and providers, food choices involve questions of value as Warde (1997) has described. For providers, this results in difficult moral choices, such as putting animal welfare before profits, or choosing to buy from other small businesses in order to support the local economy, even though this may increase costs. For tourists, equally difficult choices must be made – such as whether to spend more money and opt for more indulgent foods while on holiday, or whether to adhere to more 'everyday' standards of economising and maintaining a healthy diet. Decisions about where to shop or eat can also

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be fraught with difficulty, especially if the individual in question disapproves of supermarkets or fast-food restaurants, for example.

Closely related to discussions of morality is the question of taste, as described by Bourdieu (1984). This study has shown that tastes can play an important role in decisions made by tourists and providers because, as Bourdieu (1984) has argued, tastes are an intrinsic part of the process by which we make judgements about ourselves and others. For example, Chapter 4.2 showed that those with greater financial and cultural resources were more likely to have higher expectations of their holiday food experiences. Chapter 7.6.2 argued that such tastes can be understood as micro-level cognitive structures that have the ability to constrain or enable us in much the same way as our ability to access money or resources can.

The fact that tastes were so important to the decisions made by tourists also had an impact on providers. Chapter 5.10 showed that café and restaurant owners were using marketing strategies in order to make their businesses appear more or less distinctive, in accordance with the kind of customers that they were looking to attract (p.211). Such tactics meant that consumers were being segmented into a series of niche markets with distinctive 'tastes', which had the effect of reducing the degree of direct competition that could exist between neighbouring establishments operating in busy tourist areas. However, by distinguishing themselves from their competitors, providers were also reinforcing the tourists' tendency to segment themselves from each other on the basis of taste, as described by Bourdieu (1984). The relationship

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between producer distinction and consumer distinction is therefore a reciprocal one.

However, although Chapter 7 illustrated the ways in which tourists and providers were constrained by a host of factors, ranging from small-scale cognitive structures relating to tastes and values, through to larger-scale processes relating to political and economic structures, this thesis has also shown that tourists and providers are capable of being resourceful and adaptable.

I have argued that, instead of focusing on binary opposites – such as Plog's (1974) distinction between the psychocentric and the allocentric traveller, or Fischler's (1988) distinction between the neophilic and the neophobic eater – people's food and tourism choices are best described by more hybridised understandings that take account of the tourist's need for both the different <u>and</u> the familiar; the adventurous <u>and</u> the safe; the global <u>and</u> the local (see Section 8.5.1). For this reason, I have suggested that it is more helpful to think of each of these concepts as forming part of a continuous spectrum on which tourists, café and restaurant owners and food producers can locate themselves. Key examples of the kinds of spectra identified in this thesis include those relating to the degree of difference and familiarity that tourists are willing to tolerate on holiday (Chapter 5.6) and the degree and type of authenticity that tourists are seeking from their holiday food (Chapter 6.7).

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As I have emphasised, it is important to realise that the majority of people do not occupy single, fixed positions on these spectra. Instead, they are able to use their own agency to move throughout them in a creative and adaptable way. Despite this, structural constraints relating to cognitive structures, family status, and a person's financial and cultural resources, as described in Chapter 7.6, mean that some people will inevitably be able to move more often and more freely throughout these spectra than others.

However, it is also important to remember that concepts such as 'difference' and 'familiarity' are not fixed. Just as people's behaviour can change and adapt, so these concepts can alter their meaning over time as we learn from past experiences. For example, Chapter 4.2 explained that it is important to understand people's prior expectations when trying to explain why a holiday food experience has been interpreted as it has. In this chapter, I argued that our prior expectations do not result only from our own individual tastes or preconceptions about the place we are visiting. Instead, they are modified in the light of each successive holiday that we take, so that a series of holidays where we have enjoyed the food will result in raised expectations, and *vice versa*. This can help explain why a bad experience may be considered disastrous by one visitor, while being merely disappointing to another. Such examples illustrate that people's own unique perceptions also form an important part of the context in which a holiday food experience is interpreted. As a result, these experiences can also provide an insight into how a person understands themselves and others.

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Chapter 6 also provided an indication of how tourists were engaging with the concept of authenticity. Yeoman (2006) has described the process of 'authenti-seeking', whereby visitors look for authenticity in tourism products and services as well as in themselves, and this study supports this view by showing that tourists were not only interested in the 'objective' authenticity of food products *per se* – for example, such as finding out where products were made. They also valued the kind of existential authenticity described by Wang (1999), which enabled them to use holiday food experiences to reconnect with friends and family and to gain a stronger sense of self. Wang has argued that, unlike objective or socially constructed accounts of authenticity, existential authenticity is not about the nature of the objects encountered on the holiday. Instead, it is about the feelings of enjoyment and 'wholeness' that we may experience when taking part in some holiday activities. I have argued that holiday meals offer a particularly good opportunity for tourists to encounter such existential authenticity because the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and a sense of reconnecting with friends and family – both of which can be experienced over a leisurely and delicious holiday meal – are also identified by Wang as important components of existential authenticity.

Cohen (2002) argues that both objective and existential accounts of authenticity are important to tourists, and I have shown that this is also the case with food, as visitors tend to move throughout the spectrum of authenticity – sometimes choosing foods that they consider to be more 'objectively' authentic and, at other times during the holiday, being satisfied with the experience of existential authenticity that can result from any kind of

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enjoyable meal experience. For example, Chapter 6.4 shows that local foods were often attractive to tourists because they were perceived as more 'authentic' in an objective sense – hence the importance of H56's "proper Italian" meal in Siena (p.237). However, even those who professed to enjoy local foods would rarely eat them for the entire duration of the holiday so that, for example, a good Chinese or Indian meal in Ambleside could, on occasions, prove just as enticing as a meal of Cumberland sausage or Herdwick lamb. At these times, the quest for 'objective' authenticity was not as important as the experience of existential authenticity that could result from enjoying an indulgent meal with friends.

In theory, therefore, feelings of existential authenticity can result from any kind of enjoyable holiday food experience. However, Chapter 6.7 argues that existential authenticity is particularly likely to result from an encounter with 'local' food. This is because the search for existential authenticity can be understood as a search for meaning and, as explained previously, local foods have meaning in terms of their ability to convey the story of the place and culture that produced them (p.282). The fact that holiday food experiences can result in an experience of existential authenticity through which we can enjoy a more meaningful relationship with ourselves, others and the world around us thus highlights a central argument of this thesis, which is that our food choices have a significance that goes beyond that of satisfying hunger.

When planning this study, the relationship of food to place, and the relationship of food to the self and the 'Other', were presented as two separate

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components of the study's research aim. However, the findings discussed here suggest that we cannot entirely separate the two, because our understanding of place is related to our understanding of self. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that context is crucial to our interpretation of events, and I would argue that we can also understand ourselves and others through understanding the places that we are in. For example, the couple who reported avoiding "loud and plastic" eating places, in favour of the "cosy little real-ale pub" (p.238), were clearly making connections between their sense of place and their sense of themselves. In the same way, our experiences of holiday food and drink do not just happen – they happen in a particular place and, consequently, that place becomes central to the meanings that we attach to that experience. Clearly, such arguments do not just apply to food experiences on holiday. However, I would argue that they are more pertinent on holiday because of the ways in which holidays, in providing something of a change from the everyday, have the potential to make food and place experiences more significant and visible to us.

Such observations lead to some more general theoretical points about the ways in which we understand and research the links between food and tourism. These address the key research aim of what kinds of concepts researchers should employ in order to develop a clearer understanding of people's food and tourism choices. However, before discussing this aim in detail, it is important to consider the role that my two case study areas – the Lake District and Exmoor – played in the research. The following section

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highlights key similarities and differences between the regions in order to show the value of spatial comparisons as an element in research design.

8.4 The Lake District and Exmoor: insights from a dual-place approach

Choosing to conduct research in more than one location involves extra work for the researcher and it is therefore important to ask whether the advantages of multi-site research outweigh the additional amounts of time, effort and expenditure required to pursue such a strategy. In the case of the present project, I would argue that the decision to include both the Lake District and Exmoor was the right one, for several reasons.

In the first instance, there were some differences between the two locations, with Exmoor food and tourism providers being slightly more vulnerable to geographical and seasonal constraints than their Lake District counterparts. For example, Exmoor's food producers and café and restaurant owners appeared more inclined to struggle financially over the winter months (p.319) in comparison to their Lake District counterparts. The menu analysis conducted in Chapter 6.6 also revealed that Exmoor's place-based food marketing strategy was not as strongly-developed as that of the Lake District, with eating establishments on Exmoor employing a narrower range of marketing strategies and being much less likely to give specific information about the origins of ingredients than establishments in the Lake District. In addition to this, it was only possible to interview tourists staying in 'luxury' four or five-star hotels in the Lake District, simply because this higher level of top-end tourism was not present on Exmoor (p.108).

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I have argued that these differences occur because, in comparison to Exmoor, the Lake District has a larger visitor economy with stronger links between the local food and tourism sectors. This conclusion is supported by some basic visitor statistics. As outlined in Chapter 3.3, Cumbria received 15.17 million visitors in 2006 (Cumbria Tourism, 2006) and these visitors were responsible for bringing £1,073 million into the region. By contrast, Exmoor's tourist industry is much smaller, with just 1.2 million visitor nights being spent in the park in 2000, and these visitors spending just under £40 million (Exmoor National Park Authority, 2001). The Lake District also has good transport links, with the M6 running right past the national park boundary, and a much larger resident population than Exmoor (40,000, as opposed to 10,500 – see p.98-99). Exmoor's smaller, more seasonal visitor base, poor transport links and sparse resident population will thus restrict the development of its local food industry, resulting in businesses being more vulnerable to constraints such as those resulting from seasonality.

Therefore researchers – in addition to food and tourism entrepreneurs – must be sensitive to the local economic and geographical context affecting respondents in a particular location. The importance of context-sensitive research will be discussed in more detail in Section 8.5.2 (below). However, in relation to the present argument, the main point to note is that a comparison of the two locations revealed factors that can affect a destination's ability to support a thriving food and tourism industry, such as population density, transport links and the size of a region's visitor economy.

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There is, however, a second rationale for promoting multi-site research. As the preceding argument suggests, the differences between the two locations were relatively small, and they should therefore be understood as differences of degree rather than character. For example, Exmoor had a slightly less developed local food marketing strategy and was slightly more vulnerable to constraints of scale and seasonality than the Lake District, but the nature of these marketing strategies and constraints remained very similar in both locations.

An analysis of tourist attitudes and behaviour confirmed such similarities, with visitor responses to food showing little difference between the study locations. For example, Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that food played a similar role in the holiday for visitors to both regions. Expectation and anticipation were important for all tourists (Chapter 4.2), as was the need to manage risks effectively and balance difference and familiarity within the holiday setting (Chapter 5.4). Chapter 7.6 also showed that constraints relating to availability and access, economic factors, family status and cognitive structures were common to all visitors – regardless of destination.

Such correspondence between the two regions suggests that we can have increased confidence in the wider relevance of the study. As outlined in Chapter 3.3, researchers who focus only on one place may have difficulty discerning whether their findings could prove more widely applicable, as there is always the possibility that those findings are the result of processes unique

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to that particular case study. However, because the conclusions of this project were shared by the Lake District and Exmoor, I would argue that my findings are more likely to be indicative of wider issues concerning the relationship between food and tourism in general. This project was focused on the specific context of UK tourists visiting national parks, and therefore it would be wrong to argue that its findings can automatically be applied to all tourists or all destinations (see Section 8.8). Nevertheless, the similarities identified above suggest that these results have relevance beyond the immediate context of the Lake District and Exmoor. At the very least, they can clearly be applied to studies of food tourism in other upland rural locations throughout the UK and Ireland and, to some extent, to other rural areas.

Having established the case for wider relevance, the following section develops these arguments by addressing the main research aim of the thesis, which was to identify and develop concepts that will help us better understand people's holiday food and drink choices.

8.5 Key concepts for food and tourism research

By focusing on the two components of my research aim and asking how our holiday food and drink choices relate, firstly, to our sense of place and, secondly, to our understanding of ourselves and others, the preceding discussion suggests that four key themes – difference and familiarity, identity, place and authenticity – should be explored by researchers wishing to gain a better understanding of the links between food and tourism. In addition to these four themes, I argue that researchers should also pay attention to two

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overarching concepts – hybridity and context – which have implications for the ways in which people's food and tourism choices should be analysed. An appreciation of the role played by hybridity and context is vital because the utility of the four key themes rests upon the successful application of these two overarching concepts, as the ensuing discussion illustrates.

The four key themes are as follows:

A) Difference and familiarity. Contrary to ideas expressed in the literature (Ryan, 2002a), holidays are not just about difference. As discussed in Chapter 5, both the familiar and the different are important components of the holiday food experience for both tourists and producers. Tourists are resourceful individuals who are capable of creatively combining aspects of familiarity and difference in their vacations in a variety of ways according to the amount of risk that they are willing to incur on a specific occasion, while providers also engage in a similar balancing act. Too much familiarity and they risk losing what makes their business 'special': too much difference and they risk alienating their more mainstream customers. However, the main interest for researchers comes, not just from knowing that both difference and familiarity are important in the holiday food experience, but from looking at precisely <u>how</u> and <u>why</u> the two are combined and recombined across varying sets of circumstances, as will be discussed further in Section 8.5.1.

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B) Identity. This thesis shows that people's holiday food and drink choices can provide an insight into how they understand themselves and their place in the world. These insights go beyond simply classifying someone as an 'adventurous' or a 'safe' type of traveller (Plog, 1974), or as a 'neophilic' or 'neophobic' eater (Fischler, 1988). Instead, they encompass multiple forms of 'taste', as identified by Bourdieu (1984), which can relate to people's morality and value systems. This was evident from the example of a number of tourists such as H2 (p.153), who wanted to impress others by describing how she had eaten ostrich, zebra and hippopotamus in Kenya, and H17 who preferred fast food restaurants to what he described as *"fancy French cuisine"* (p.160). In both cases, the food choices of these individuals went beyond simple dietary preferences to reflect something about their view of themselves and their position in the world. However, such arguments do not relate only to consumers. They can also help explain why strong personal beliefs lead many food producers to persist in the face of serious practical constraints (Chapter 7.3).

C) Place. Chapter 6.2 shows that definitions of locality are contested. Despite this, food that is perceived to be 'local' plays a prominent role within tourism because food can act as a marker of place, and tourists can use food to explore the nature of the place and culture that they are visiting (Boniface, 2003, Bessière, 1998). Place image is also important to food producers who seek to market their products through emphasising the connections between the characteristics of a product, and the characteristics of its place of origin. Researchers must

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therefore be aware of the reciprocal nature of the connections between food and place image when investigating people's holiday food and drink choices.

D) Authenticity. This study shows that holiday foods and drinks are often selected on the basis of their perceived authenticity. For this reason, the concept of authenticity remains important for tourists and food producers, despite struggles over its meaning and validity within academic circles (Cohen, 2002, Yeoman *et al.*, 2006). Chapter 6 shows that 'local' food has the potential to give tourists the authenticity that some of them seek, while also giving providers a unique selling point by which to market their products and services. This thesis argues that there are different and fluid definitions of authenticity for individuals and among whole populations, and that researchers must recognise how these can be important to different people at different times (Chapter 6.7).

The above constitute the main themes of this study and can be used as a guide for those conducting further research into food and tourism. However, I would argue that these themes will be of limited use unless researchers also adopt an analytical approach that is based upon two overarching concepts: hybridity and context. The following sub-sections illustrate the importance of these concepts and suggest ways for introducing them into the research agenda.

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8.5.1 Key concepts for food and tourism research: hybridity

In Chapter 2 I outlined some of the main concepts driving research into food and tourism. These ideas spanned a broad range of ideas and an equally broad range of disciplines, from geography and sociology through to anthropology, economics and psychology. However, one factor uniting many of these otherwise diverse approaches was the use of dichotomies to describe and explain people's behaviour in relation to holidays and food. For example, the tourism literature talks of a distinction between the ordinary/everyday nature of life at home and the 'extraordinary' experience of the holiday, which contrasts with this (Ryan, 2002a). Rojek (1993) also writes of a discourse within popular culture which attempts to draw a moral boundary between the 'tourist' – who is represented as a vulgar, uncultured person – and the 'traveller' – who is perceived as a more enlightened, responsible visitor. We could add to this Plog's (1974) description of the allocentric risk-taker, who tends towards more adventurous experiences, or the psychocentric tourist, who prefers safer, more predictable holidays.

Such dichotomies are also present in the food literature, in the shape of Fischler's (1988) description of the neophobic or neophilic eater, as well as in distinctions drawn between the self and the 'Other' (Long, 2004b, Germann Molz, 2004). Warde (1997) also proposes the 'four antinomies' of novelty and tradition, convenience and care, health and indulgence, and economy and extravagance, which show how powerful such binary distinctions have become within the literature. Indeed, more recent discussions about food networks are also based on a distinction between 'conventional' agriculture

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and the 'alternative' food sector (Morgan *et al.*, 2006, Marsden, 2004), with many accounts resting upon implicit moral judgements of 'local food = good: global food = bad'.

Such dichotomies have their uses because they capture the essence of the basic factors involved in making decisions about food and tourism and they therefore provide a neat, simple characterisation of people's behaviour. For example, it is easy to think of a person being broadly psychocentric (safe), particularly when this description can be contrasted with the broadly allocentric (adventurous) person. Equally, it makes sense to describe a salad as 'good and healthy', especially when viewed in comparison to a 'naughty but nice', indulgent, chocolate pudding. Such dichotomies have therefore proved useful throughout this thesis where I have sought to explain some of the key axes around which food and tourism decisions are made.

However, although binary, 'either/or' distinctions can be useful as a broad-brush descriptive tool, they remain problematic for intensive, interpretive research projects because they fail to capture the complex and context-specific nature of people's decision making. For example, Fischler's (1988) idea of the neophobic or neophilic eater implies a stable pattern of behaviour whereby a person will always seek only familiar foods, or only new and different foods. However, Chapter 5 showed that the majority of tourists are seeking elements of both familiarity and difference in their holiday eating. This chapter also argues that, although some people may be inclined to be more adventurous in their choices than others, tourists are actually very adaptable.

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A common practice is therefore to take different types of holiday at different times – sometimes selecting newer, riskier experiences and, at other times, opting for the safety of more familiar foods and destinations. This is also the case in relation to visitors' understandings of authenticity, as Chapter 6.7 shows that the majority of tourists vary the kind of authenticity that they seek, depending upon the circumstances of the holiday in question. Similar arguments also apply to the food producers and café and restaurant owners, who sought to combine elements of familiarity and difference in creative ways according to the type of clientele they were looking to attract (p.211). Indeed, a further example of such hybridity in action concerns the menus discussed in Chapter 6.6 where references to locality and authenticity were used alongside references to non-local places and styles of cuisine to create distinctive 'hybrid' dishes, such as Exmoor lamb accompanied by French-inspired "dauphinoise potato" and "red onion confit" (p.272).

Dichotomies are therefore a necessary tool for conceptualising events and options but do not account sufficiently for human resourcefulness or adaptability. When we look in detail at the actions undertaken by tourists, food producers and restaurateurs, we see that the choices we make are not black and white, but many different shades of grey – for each person, as well as for whole populations. For example, Morgan *et al.* (2006) and Marsden (2004) make a distinction between the 'conventional' and 'alternative' food sectors, and my research partially supports this claim because, as described in Chapters 7 and 8, food producers wanting to support local products generally have different beliefs, and perform some different actions – in terms of their

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production and processing activities – to other producers who do not have these beliefs. However, although the conventional/alternative distinction can highlight some of the key differences between the sectors, it also implies that there is complete separation between them, which is not the case (Watts *et al.*, 2005, Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). For example, P7's (30s, male, jam producer, Lake District) business was, in many ways, typical of the kind of business found in the 'alternative' food sector in that it was a small enterprise that employed local people to handcraft quality jams and chutneys. However, in recent years the company had expanded significantly and, in order to provide its customers with a consistent supply of products, it had made the decision to stop using locally-grown ingredients in favour of fruit and vegetables from a large national supply company (p.305). Such a policy would appear to have more in common with the 'conventional' sector, and this example therefore illustrates the ways in which producer strategies are complex and interwoven. Other examples of this interdependence would be supermarkets looking to stock 'local' ranges (Jackson *et al.*, 2007), or local producers attempting to expand their business by selling their products overseas.

Once again, therefore, dichotomies are useful as a broad-level tool for characterising the main trends occurring within contemporary agriculture. However, when applied to more detailed case studies which attempt to discover what actions are actually undertaken and why, they have a tendency to over-simplify things and mask the more complex and adaptable ways in which people make decisions (Holloway *et al.*, 2007a). They also imply that

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definitions – such as what is alternative and what is conventional, and what is different and what is familiar – are fixed and straightforward when the key point is that they are, in fact, dynamic and contested entities.

As a result of such difficulties, I would argue that hybridised understandings based on the use of spectra can be a more helpful form of understanding the decisions that we make about food and tourism. For example, the idea of a spectrum running from the different to the familiar, as described in Chapter 5.5, means that, instead of merely classifying someone's holiday food choices as 'exotic' or 'familiar', we can start to ask more in-depth questions: In what ways are their food choices exotic or familiar? How and why are both elements successfully combined within the holiday? And how do these decisions make sense in terms of that person's individual circumstances and history?

Similar arguments can be made for a spectrum running between 'conventional' and 'alternative' food strategies, or between the experience of objective and existential authenticity (Chapter 6.7). For example, we could ask why a food producer has chosen to run his or her business in a particular way. We could also ask which aspects of that producer's beliefs and actions suggest an affiliation to the 'alternative' sector and which could be better understood by reference to the 'conventional' sector (Maye *et al.*, 2007). In relation to authenticity, we could ask what it is about a particular holiday food experience that makes it seem authentic, before enquiring what that person's understanding of authenticity says about their understanding of place and self.

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By viewing key concepts as fluid, continuous entities, rather than either/or dichotomies, we can begin to appreciate the ways in which our understandings and actions are generally more hybridised than they may at first appear, so that it is not just the different or the familiar, or the healthy or the indulgent that matters. Instead, both elements are likely to be important in different ways and at different times. These ideas also give more credit to human resourcefulness and adaptability because, as this thesis explains, people tend to move throughout these spectra, rather than remaining in fixed positions on them. Knowing this allows us to ask questions about when these shifts in position are occurring, and why. Acknowledging the importance of hybridity thus involves the researcher looking at how and why different elements of experience are combined and recombined in particular circumstances in much the same way as a geneticist might view the offspring of two parents – despite having the same mother and father, each child is different as a result of inheriting a unique combination of characteristics from its parents.

The preceding discussion explains why hybridity should be considered a key concept for food and tourism research. However, this study also illustrates the need to develop a research agenda that understands the importance of context, in the broadest sense of the word. The following section explores and justifies the importance of context as the final key concept identified by this study.

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8.5.2 Key concepts for food and tourism research: why context is vital for studies of food and tourism

This research shows that eating and drinking are about more than just the sensation of taste. For example, the anthropologist Yoder (1972, cited in Long, 2004a) introduced the concept of 'foodways' to illustrate how food gains meaning through the social context surrounding it. Viewed from this perspective, food is not just about the taste of the meal in front of us. Instead, it acquires meaning from the ways in which it is shopped for and prepared, and from the social and physical setting in which it is consumed. As Chapter 4 shows, a person's mindset also forms an important part of this context (De Botton, 2002), and this can help explain why memorable holiday food experiences can never be recreated in their entirety.

There is therefore support for Yoder's arguments because, if we want to understand why a certain food or a certain holiday experience is significant to someone, we must understand the context in which that experience took place. By showing how contextual factors – such as mindset and the physical nature of the surrounding environment – contribute to the eating experience, this thesis demonstrates that the consumption of food and drink is a multi-sensory activity through which place, culture and identity can be more thoroughly understood (Getz and Brown, 2006, Long, 2004a). Future research must therefore take account of contextual factors – for example, by rejecting approaches based entirely on highly structured questionnaires that seek to catalogue people's food behaviour, in favour of more qualitative and intensive semi-structured interviews that are capable of encompassing – and

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understanding – the broader, more contextual factors that relate to food and travel.

Context could, of course, be understood to include everything about an individual – from the colour of their shirt to their entire life history. From a research design perspective, it would be both impossible and ill-advised to investigate all these factors, as not all aspects of context will relate directly to a person's holiday food and drink choices. However, semi-structured interviews that encourage a person to talk freely about his or her experiences are effective because they give interviewees the opportunity to raise the contextual issues that are relevant for them (Chapter 3.4). The interviews employed in this study were designed to help respondents share their holiday food choices in the context of their own beliefs, values and histories – hence the reason that I would always enquire about circumstances relating to the person's past, as well as present, holidays.

However, in addition to focusing on small-scale contextual factors that are unique to the individual's experience, I would argue that a context-based approach should also look at the role played by larger-scale factors, such as the political, social and economic context in which an experience is taking place. Such an approach involves considering the interplay of structure and agency. Structures can enable or constrain our actions. However, they can also be transformed by human agency, and Chapter 7 shows how this process is important in relation to food and tourism. For example, many café and restaurant owners wanted to support local producers, but were

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constrained by structures relating to political, economic or accessibility factors. However, those with strong personal beliefs about the importance of local food were able to use their agency to work with these structures in a creative way – for example, by changing menus to cope with a fluctuating supply of local ingredients, or by raising their prices and marketing their establishments as distinctive in order to cope with the higher costs associated with local products (Chapter 7.4). Similar arguments could also be applied to the tourists who, as described in Chapter 7.6 were also constrained by structures such as those relating to income, the accessibility of certain food types, or family status. However, instead of responding passively to such constraints, tourists would often use their agency to combat these – for example, by self-catering or bringing foods from home in order to cope with holiday foods perceived to be expensive or 'risky', as described in Chapter 5.4.

If a context-sensitive approach involves taking account of the interplay of structure and agency, there is also a powerful case for a more holistic research agenda within tourism that takes account of the perspectives of all the actors involved. This thesis shows that there is a strong degree of interdependence between producers and consumers and, by interviewing throughout the food chain, I was able to see how important these relationships were, and how decisions made by one person would inevitably have an enabling or constraining impact elsewhere (p.334). If I had interviewed only tourists, or only café and restaurant owners, for example, I would not have been able to understand the nature of these linkages between them. I would also not have realised that the same concepts – such as place and locality,

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and difference and familiarity – were important to both producers and consumers. As a result, I would argue that future research projects should be aware of the importance of these connections and designed in a way that enables researchers to take account of this.

8.6 Original contribution

This study adds to the small but growing body of research on culinary tourism by combining tourism studies with a more recent research agenda that focuses on alternative food networks. To date, few studies have made the link between these subjects, and those that have done so have tended to focus on the economic advantages of such links, rather than investigating what they may tell us about our understanding of people and places (Ilbery *et al.*, 2004, Torres, 2002). My decision to focus on the UK is also new because, perhaps understandably, most existing studies of culinary tourism have focused on countries that are more renowned for their food, such as France or Italy (Long, 2004a, Bessière, 1998, Tregear *et al.*, 2007). However, problematising the familiar can be a useful exercise and, by analysing how the growth of alternative food networks in the UK can be linked to the tourism agenda, I have been able to explore what has the potential to be a new and important area of development for the food and tourism industries.

As outlined previously, this thesis is also unusual in its decision to include both consumers and providers, and to employ hybridised understandings of some of the key concepts used in food and tourism. By recommending an approach based upon a number of different spectra, as opposed to dichotomies (see

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section 8.5.1), it offers a new way forward for research that could be used by researchers working in food and tourism fields more generally. The use of spectra is particularly important because it encourages researchers to stop assigning people to a range of pre-determined, fixed categories – such as the 'risk-averse' tourist or the 'adventurous' eater, for example. Instead, we can move towards a more sophisticated, nuanced understanding of how and why people are creatively positioning and re-positioning themselves along a variety of axes – such as those relating to difference and familiarity and authenticity, for example.

A further significant contribution is this thesis's focus on the interplay of structure and agency. At present, studies of culinary tourism often focus more upon agency, in terms of the motivations and decisions that can influence tourist behaviour (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2001, Bessière, 1998, Long, 2004a). However, this study shows that an understanding of structure and its interaction with agency is equally important when trying to interpret the food and tourism choices that individuals make (Chapter 7).

This research also provides a new insight into the role that authenticity can play within culinary tourism. Decades of debate within the tourism literature have resulted in authenticity being viewed as a highly problematic concept (Wang, 1999, Hughes, 1995). However, by using Cohen's (2002) argument, which suggests that tourists employ different definitions of authenticity at different times, this thesis shows that authenticity, though problematic, can still prove helpful for those researching food and tourism. For example, although

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the idea of 'objective' authenticity has been critiqued by academia, it can still have value for tourists. Chapter 6.7 shows how tourists move throughout the spectrum of authenticity so that they will sometimes value food experiences because they perceive them to be authentic in an 'objective' sense, as was the case for the Siena café that was seen to be "proper Italian" (p.237). However, at other times, the existential authenticity that comes from enjoying any kind of good meal experience on holiday can be more important, as Wang (1999) has argued. Therefore, the idea of authenticity can still prove helpful to researchers, as long as they recognise that there are different kinds of authenticity, and that the concept can be used flexibly by different people at different times.

A final, and related, factor to note is that this research is unique in its focus on the importance of a broad interpretation of context within the holiday food experience. Although theorists such as Long (2004b) and Boniface (2003) have argued that context is important, they have not emphasised the fact that context goes beyond the importance of physical setting to encompass factors such as mindset (De Botton, 2002) and prior expectations (Warde and Martens, 2000, Urry, 2005). By contrast, this study shows that context is about both our sense of place and our sense of self.

I shall now highlight some of the practical implications of this research, before outlining ways in which the findings of this study could be taken forward by future research into culinary tourism.

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8.7 Practical implications

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in developing increased links between food and tourism following claims that boosting the connections between the sectors can result in a host of economic, environmental and social benefits for the region concerned (Visit Britain, 2006, Working Group on Local Food, 2003). The findings of this study could therefore prove useful for a wide range of actors, from food and tourism providers to government officials, tourist boards and regional development agencies looking to foster increased economic development within their localities.

In relation to food and tourism providers, this research suggests that the consumer market is segmented by 'taste', as tourists have a tendency to seek out practices that will distinguish them from others (Bourdieu, 1984). As a result, there is a genuine demand for distinctive products and services to serve these 'tastes' within the tourist market. Food producers and café and restaurant owners who wish to increase their business would therefore be well-advised to consider the various ways in which they can create distinction for their products and services. I have argued that such distinction can, to a certain extent, be achieved by astute marketing tactics that work to construct and accentuate the individual characteristics of a business. For example, simple strategies such as promoting 'house' specials on the menu, or providing information about the history of a restaurant can add an element of difference to an otherwise routine eating establishment. However, Chapter 6 shows that this sense of distinction can also be furthered by the inclusion of 'local' products that are perceived to have connections to local place and

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culture. Of course, these local products must also be marketed as such because, unless café and restaurant owners actively promote their distinctiveness, their impact on tourists will be lost.

There is, however, an element of contradiction here in that tourists also seek variety in their holiday food experiences. For example, Chapter 6.7 shows that tourists who like to try the local food on holiday may also look for a 'different' cuisine – such as Indian or Chinese – during their stay, in order to experience more variety. This implies that, if every restaurant or shop were to stock the same array of local products, variety would be reduced and competition between businesses would increase. However, I would argue that this does not necessarily mean there are limits to the scope of the local food industry because consumers wanting variety can be satisfied with small variations, thus removing the need for providers to create major points of difference in their businesses. If local products are used creatively and marketed in novel ways, there is therefore infinite scope for variation, as Warde and Martens have argued (2000). By using – and marketing – local products in a variety of different contexts, food providers can therefore satisfy tourist demands for distinction and variety at the same time. Thus localness can be constructed and reconstructed in a variety of ways to ensure that some element of novelty is always present in an experience.

At the regional and national scale, there are also implications for government, tourist boards, regional food groups and development agencies, because the findings presented here suggest that there is a real demand for distinctive

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P = Interviews with food producers

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local foods among tourists. This study did not seek to quantify the precise nature of the economic, social and environmental impacts of local food and tourism. However, interviews with food and tourism providers suggest that promoting the links between local food and tourism could result in significant benefits for both sectors. At present, the UK government recognises that food tourism could prove beneficial to the economy – particularly in lagging rural regions (Working Group on Local Food, 2003, Defra, 2003). However, it has not explored these benefits in any detail or examined how food tourism in the UK can prove attractive, not just to international visitors, but also to British citizens holidaying within their own country. By contrast, the findings of this study suggest that these benefits deserve more attention and support at government level. Indeed, policy makers may be particularly interested in the findings of Chapter 7, which illustrate the kinds of constraints experienced by local food producers and café and restaurant owners. The issues raised in this chapter suggest that government attempts to support and encourage 'alternative' food producers will have limited impact unless the wider political, economic and accessibility constraints that affect such businesses can be addressed successfully.

8.8 Future research

Culinary tourism is very broad in scope, and there are therefore many options for further research. While conducting this study, I identified a number of additional debates, such as those relating to equity and inclusiveness and the perceived link between scale and quality (p.303). For example, questions were raised about how local food might be made more affordable for lower

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income groups, and about the advantages and disadvantages for local food producers of getting their products into supermarkets. There were also issues surrounding the longer-term effects of producer and provider strategies as well as questions about the possible impacts of public policies for the local food sector. Although these issues were interesting, I was unable to pursue them in any detail because they were not central to the research questions I was investigating. However, researchers interested in alternative food networks could choose to explore such subjects in future. It is also worth noting that many of the concepts identified as key to this research – including issues of distinction, 'taste', authenticity and economic value, could be extended in order to assess the role played by non-food items (such as heritage events or craft products) in the tourist experience.

This study has, of course, focused specifically on culinary tourism and, in doing so, it points to a further set of questions that could be explored by subsequent research projects. Given the importance of context to food and tourism studies, the most obvious extension of this study would be to see how its findings relate to other places and cultures. For example, I have argued that a place-based marketing strategy is very effective for food producers in the Lake District and Exmoor because the clean, green images commonly associated with these destinations can be conferred on food products originating from the area (Chapter 6.5). However, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study of culinary tourism in a location that has a very different image of place in order to see if similar – or contrasting – principles are being applied. For example, the 'Birmingham Bites' campaign is an

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attempt to attract visitors by focusing on the cosmopolitan and varied nature of urban dining experiences available in the city (Visit Britain, 2006), and it would therefore be interesting to explore what role – if any – concepts such as place and authenticity have in marketing Birmingham's food tourism scene.

This research could also be extended to a non-UK context where different political, economic and social structures are likely to be operating. For example, it would be possible to explore whether place and authenticity prove as important to food tourism in countries with a well-established reputation for their food – such as France or Italy. However, the UK, France and Italy are all reasonably wealthy countries with well-developed economies that support large numbers of restaurants and the social practices of holidaying and eating out (Warde and Martens, 2000). As a result, it would also be interesting to investigate attitudes to food and tourism in other, less affluent, countries where there are few opportunities for people to take holidays or dine out, in order to explore whether culinary tourism has – or can have – any role in these societies.

In addition to exploring culinary tourism in different locations, researchers could also investigate how people from different cultures interpret holiday food experiences. This study focussed almost exclusively on the perspectives of British citizens, and future research could test its findings by investigating whether those from different cultures interpret culinary tourism in similar ways. Such projects could prove interesting as the majority of existing research into

culinary tourism is based upon studies of American or European visitors (Long, 2004b).

Finally, researchers could also choose to investigate how food tourism can be applied to non-corporeal travel. In addition to corporeal travel, which is bodily movement through the different forms of transport that are physically available to us, Urry (2006) has identified four further types of travel, including virtual travel through the internet and imaginative travel through the telephone, radio and television. These ideas could prove particularly relevant to culinary tourism because, in developed economies at least, foods from a variety of different places are increasingly accessible to us in our home environment – for example, via the Internet or television, through the dishes on offer at the local restaurant, and through the ingredients available on the supermarket shelf. It would therefore be interesting to explore how – and why – people may choose to engage in food tourism while remaining in their own neighbourhoods, and what impact, if any, this has upon the practice of physically travelling to different places to experience different foods.

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