

Critical Factors in the Development and Performance of Food and Wine Trails in Australia



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Abstract

Food and wine trails are a new and exciting part of culinary tourism in Australia. Such attractions are now an integral part of tourism in all the main food and wine production states. While trails join multiple food and wine venues into linked destinations for tourists and have grown in number, they are not widely understood. There has been very little research on them in Australia or overseas.

There exists a need to provide a greater appreciation of food and wine trails. If trails are to function adequately for the participant businesses and visitors, if they are to be assisted by private and government agencies then more needs to be known about their origins, development and performance.

This qualitative research was undertaken in the three states of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. The research objectives incorporated:

- establishing the principal factors involved in the development and performance of food and wine trails in Australia.
- understanding the economic importance of food and wine trails,
- comprehending and elaborating upon critical components,
- developing an awareness of the demography and expectation of tourist-consumers on food and wine trails.

Finally, a principal aim was to develop a theoretical framework through which food and wine trails can be understood.

The findings indicate that the principal reason for trail development is economic; it is related to one or other element of the profound economic and social change that has overtaken rural areas of Australia in the last 30 years. Producers need to supplement their income in changing circumstances. The performance factors were more varied and included trail coordination; critical mass; variety; experience and stories; tourist readiness and commitment; quality; promotion and theme; agency support and regulation, and compliance costs. Trails contribute to producer revenue and local economies. The tourist-consumers who visit are varied; from the findings it is not possible to say that a trail visitor is necessarily going to be committed to food and wine. The overall and pre-eminent factor from business operators, tourist-consumers and ancillary agents, however, was the presentation of an interesting and enjoyable tourist experience. The thesis concludes with the presentation of a systems-based framework for understanding food and wine trails.

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Declaration

I, Robert J. (Robb) Mason, declare that the PhD thesis entitled 'Critical Factors in the Development and Performance of Food and Wine Trails in Australia', is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work.

Signature:

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Lina Emma Browning Mason (1905—2005). Her long life, devoted to family and friends, was lived with grace, humanity and a great sense of fun.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Food, wine, tourism and trails

Food, wine and tourism are natural partners (Carlsen & Dowling 1999); the three elements complement each other. Tourists need sustenance and stimulation; food and wine producers benefit from the enhanced business tourism can bring. This natural complementarity is an increasingly valuable component of local, state and national tourism strategies as governments vie to provide stimulus for their economies (Morgan 2005). It appears to add direction and vigour to tourism strategies. For instance, the Australian state of Victoria, early in its tourism planning, recognised, ‘... the natural synergy between food and wine’ (Tourism Victoria 2002b, p. 95) and acknowledged its importance as a State prerogative. Similarly, the Australian Government acknowledged that, ‘food and wine tourism represents a significant and growing part of the Australian tourism industry’ (Tourism Australia 2005a, p. 1)

Food and wine trails purposefully harness such natural synergy. They are intentional amalgams of food, wine and tourism (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Knowd 2003a). Primary producers of wine and food deliberately link their businesses together in chains of gastronomic appeal in order to attract visitors—and sell product. Trails exemplify the natural partnership referred to previously. In so doing they may well have the capacity to create greater custom for the enterprises involved and enhance the economies of the communities in which they operate (Brunori & Rossi 2000; Knowd 2003a; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

For trails seem to be more than the sum of their parts, more than just simple food and wine combinations. A trail provides a special road or route, the allure of a journey through time and territory. Trails can incorporate other cultural and historic attractions, tourist amenities and residential accommodation as well as scenic viewpoints and vistas. This expands possibilities for the tourist and can create linkages between trail businesses and other local commercial agents that further increase economic potential (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002).

Food and wine trails seem to offer the benefits just outlined for tourists, tourism businesses and government agencies alike. Yet little is known about them. They would seem to have significant economic, social and cultural potential for producers, consumers and regions. Yet, they are relatively new—and under-researched. This is the case in Australia and also in

Europe where relevant academic literature is similarly sparse (Hall, D & Boyne 2007). Trails appear almost enigmatic. Not much is known about their formation, structure, function or outcomes; that is, what factors influence their development and performance, what makes them work. The general aim of this research is to investigate trails further in Australia in order to advance the limited understanding of this phenomenon.

1.2 The significance of food and wine trails

Improved patronage for food and wine producers involved in trails would seem to have many positive spin-offs for the rural and peri-urban areas in which they operate. Peri-urban areas are those semi-rural zones that often surround cities, large and small. Regardless of location, the potential outcomes from food and wine trails in Australia, and elsewhere, have been seen to be improved production and sale of food and wine, promotion of tourism, improved employment prospects, and the retention of people and money in rural areas (Brunori & Rossi 2000; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

The importance of such outcomes is acknowledged. They contribute to the life and vitality of communities for they seem capable of, ‘... ensuring the sustainability and viability of the regional tourist industry [and are] vital to the diversification of regional Australia’ (Department of Industry Tourism and Resources 2003a, p. 33). These are genuine priorities at a time of local and global economic uncertainty, when primary production (including winemaking) is exposed to continuing change and unpredictability, when producers are looking for other economic options to maintain their viability (Collits 2004; Hegarty & Przezborska 2005).

Hence, the development of food and wine trails can be seen as supply driven, largely initiated by local businesses in order to enhance their revenue base. Yet, visitor demand or tourist appeal seems an influential demand consideration as well. There is growing demand for food and wine experiences; activities that are about gaining ‘knowledge and experience’ and ‘experiencing the difference’ (Knowd 2003a, p. 1). Other possible strengths of food and wine trails for consumers seem to be their potential to provide:

- i. immediate and direct sensual experience of food and wine;
- ii. closer engagement with food and wine producers and heightened understanding of rural issues;
- iii. better awareness of food practices, history and provenance and hence improved knowledge of food safety and health;

- iv. enhanced enjoyment and experience as a tourist including the potential for conversation, and thus
- v. confirmation that the tourist is someone interested in and knowledgeable about food and wine (Sage 2003a, 2003b).

There may well be other factors that influence trail development. It has been suggested, for instance, that travelling a trail is a powerful human propensity, the manifestation of a simple human desire to follow designated paths (Moulin & Boniface 2001). This is affirmed by tourism theorists who recognise the importance of trails as a means of providing meaningful visitor experience as well as enhanced local economic performance (Meyer-Czech 2005). Trails also spread tourism more broadly, moving tourists away from congested sites towards under-visited and perhaps less well-resourced areas (Meyer 2004). Trail travel can thus cross geographical and administrative boundaries and establish connections among disparate people and agencies (Moulin & Boniface 2001). So, as Hall and Boyne (2007, p. 213) acknowledge, ‘trails are becoming an important element of local and regional cultural tourism and a means of knitting together sparse rural regions, linearly distributed attractions, and cross-border complementarities’.

Food and wine trails do appear significant. They are important to tourism and local economic development. What follows now is a brief introduction to the impetus behind their appearance and growth which will identify some of the issues to be investigated throughout this thesis. Such issues include the varied rural responses to change including the development of alternative food networks (Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003); changing consumer interest in food production and consumption together with growing environmental and food safety concerns (Ilbery et al. 2000; Ilbery et al. 2005); the relevance of changing tourist patterns (Poon 2003) including the importance of culinary tourism (Hjalager & Richards 2002; Long 2004a) and the differing cultural attitudes towards food and wine, especially in regard to matters of identity (Bell & Valentine 1997). While these are not all goals of the research, their importance is highlighted within the literature review as being significant to the development of trails.

1.3 Inception of food and wine trails

Food and wine trails appeared in the principal food and wine production areas of Australia in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This largely equates with the emergence of similarly themed European trails as well (Hall, D & Boyne 2007). It also begs the question as to why developments with such apparent advantage for food, wine and tourism are so recent.

Shields (1992) suggests that such an activity—one that combines tourism, production and consumption in the way that food and wine trails do—could only have resulted from the progress of modernity, and thus be relatively recent. For,

It is the *combination* of practices and behaviours kept apart according to classic portraits of modernity. In their totality, postmodern consumption sites are characterized by a new spatial form which is a synthesis of leisure and consumption activities previously held apart by being located in different sites, performed at different times or accomplished by different people (Shields 1992, p. 6 emphasis in original).

Shields (1992) establishes the concept of synthesised leisure and consumption sites but only flags the idea of change to those areas. What have the changes actually been and what has prompted them? What motivated such particular development? First, for food and wine production and consumption, the answers would seem to lie in broad contemporary socio-cultural and economic forces at work within the rural sector, and modern trends in consumer tastes and patterns (Bell & Valentine 1997; Cocklin & Dibden 2004; Collits 2004; Urry 2003). Second, and similarly, changes in tourism can be seen as a, ‘... particular manifestation of wider social, economic and cultural phenomena’ (Meethan 2003, p. 11). An initial analysis of both areas of change will be introduced here and will continue the division between demand and supply factors as a means to understanding. The issues will then be investigated more closely within the following chapters with a view to determining their relevance to the development and performance of trails.

Rural areas in Australia are diverse and different (ALGA 2001). They appear united by one over-arching similarity, however, and that is their exposure to profound change—climatic, economic, social and cultural—with profoundly significant repercussions. Some of this has been wrought by deregulation and globalisation, politico-economic drives of considerable force (Collits 2004; Pritchard & McManus 2000; Vanclay 2003). Whatever the causes, and they will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two, the results of the change appear dramatic. They have been further intensified by the uncertainty of climate change and the linked problems of drought and environmental degradation which have led to pressures on water policy (Mercer, Christesen & Buxton 2007). Changes to Australia’s rural fabric have been deep and widespread. Customary farming arrangements have been altered, long-held demographic configurations upended and rural society subjected to intense pressure (Pritchard & McManus 2000). One area that has undergone substantial change in particular is agriculture with consequent impacts upon the lives and practices of primary producers, their families and communities.

The repercussions of this system-wide change for agricultural practitioners have been profound (Collits 2004). Some producers have left the industry altogether because significant parts of the grazing, farming and horticultural sectors are no longer viable (Lawrence & Gray 2000). Others have extended, capitalised and mechanised their operations in order to be more efficient. Yet even those who have remained on their properties and not had to expand, have often had to modify systems and processes that have sustained them for generations (La Trobe & Acott 2000; Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003). It is changes such as these that seem to provide a key to understanding the advent of food and wine trails.

Before entering that discussion, however, mention needs to be made of the particular situation facing vignerons. Grape growers are in a different yet oft-times as tenuous position as all horticulturalists. The success of the drive to export Australian wine in the 1990s prompted extensive grape plantings in order to capitalise on this marketing triumph (Webb & Gregory 2005). Such expansion was encouraged by Australian Government taxation policy that valorised premium wine grape production in particular (O'Neil, Neal & Nguyen 2004). The resultant glut of grapes caused a drop in the price of product. This meant the removal of vines and the decline of grape prices in Australia more generally (Anderson 2001; Port 2006a; Speedy 2006; Webb & Gregory 2005). The plight of some growers was made worse by extended drought and, more recently, by the global economic downturn that commenced in 2008. As a consequence, wine tourism took on added importance for a number of vineyards as a means to provide a more consistent income stream (Kronos Corporate 2002).

As noted previously, the response to such rural change has been varied. Certainly, one approach for primary producers has been to develop options as a hedge against change and uncertainty (Marsden, Banks & Bristow 2000). Wine tourism, as suggested, was one. The development of alternative food networks, a phenomenon that encompasses food and wine trails (Marsden, Murdoch & Morgan 1999; Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003) was another. Alternative food networks will be introduced here and elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

Alternative food networks enable primary producers to work outside or alongside standard commodity chains. They provide marketing options other than food chains such as those driven by the national supermarkets in Australia. They can thus be seen as an elective means to capitalise upon new and changing consumer interests and concerns about food and wine. Various forms of alternative food networks have been identified. Farmers markets and community-supported agriculture are among the most popular (Hinrichs 2000; Lamine 2005;

Lockie et al. 2002), yet there are others, food and wine trails among them (Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003).

Alternative food networks are one supply-driven response to rural problems. Other changes, mostly involving demand, have also had an impact—particularly the changing place of food and wine in cultural matters. One special indicator of demand is the success of culinary tourism.

The importance of gastronomy as a stimulus for tourism is of increasing significance in a number of countries; South Africa, Canada and the United States of America, for instance (du Rand, Heath & Alberts 2003; Hjalager & Richards 2002; Kivela & Crofts 2006; Long 2004b; Wolf 2002). In part, this is seen as a move from a world of more leisured tourist intentions (Urry 1990) to one where people, ‘... want to get their hands on the world, to taste it, feel it, smell it and importantly, *do things with it* and not just look at it’ (Franklin 2003, p. 9, emphases in original). Culinary tourism is a phrase often associated with Lucy Long (2004a). Certainly, she was among the earlier theoreticians to note that sites of food production, presentation and consumption had become tourist destinations in their own right. Food and wine have progressed from being constituent factors within menus to the status of independent and separate tourist destinations, interesting attractions for visitors to frequent. Visitors are drawn to El Bulli, Spain’s famous and iconic restaurant (Svejenova, Mazza & Marcel 2007), for instance. They are also attracted to local Spanish food festivals, provincial markets, out-of-the-way producers and small, local vignerons. Hall and Sharples (2003) followed up these insights with a model for understanding such food and tourism connections and proposed that:

... such is the need for food to be a primary factor in influencing travel behaviour and decision making that as a form of special interest travel, food tourism may possibly be regarded as an example of culinary, gastronomic, gourmet or cuisine tourism that reflects consumers for whom interest in food is a form of ‘serious leisure’ (p. 10).

Yet this expanding interest in food and wine is not predicated on leisured interests alone. More recently, food production and provenance have been subject to growing consumer concern over food security, health and safety (*inter alia*, Fitzgerald & Hugh 2001; Goodman 2003; Ilbery & Kneafsey 1999; Ilbery et al. 2004; Jordan 2007; Slow Food 2005).

Consumers show increasing concern over how food is produced, what goes into it and onto it, and the means though which it is processed. They do indeed want to see it, touch it, feel it, taste it—comprehend its qualities and characteristics before they buy. Much of this interest

has been prompted by unease over some harmful products of the industrialised agrifood system (Allen et al. 2003). These concerns are manifold but they can be classified into two broad areas; first, elements related to self and, second, regard for the environment. Issues about self include those of food safety and health in general as well as the pleasures of taste and commensality. Concern for the environment incorporates the desire to minimise damage to the ecosystem and maintain sustainability. They relate to issues such as farming practice, livestock rearing and ethical consumption as well (Lamine 2005).

Connected to concerns for self and the environment is another important contemporary issue; the enhanced role of food and wine as a cultural signifier (Bell 2002; Bell & Valentine 1997). Food and wine have generated personal meaning and narrative beyond their commonplace capacity to sustain life (Lash & Urry 1994). It is almost banal to suggest that you are what you eat (Brillat-Savarin 1970). It now seems equally appropriate to suggest that you are where you are seen to eat, frequent or talk about (Fine 2001); a point which further underscores the relevance of food and wine trails.

For the contemporary consumption of food and drink has gone beyond instrumentality to be more completely understood as a constituent of personal identity, a means of projecting distinctiveness. So, 'a brand can be used as a badge, in the same way a fashion accessory can be' (Miletic 2010). Particular styles, places and objects of consumption are ways of manifesting self and social differentiation. People assert their identity through consumption. Goods and services that incorporate food and wine now have symbolic values attached to them (Ray 2003). Warde (2001, p. 557) confirms the notion that,

... today, people define themselves through the messages they transmit to others through the goods and practices that they possess and display. They manipulate or manage appearances and thereby create and sustain a 'self-identity'. In a world where there is an increasing number of commodities available to act as props in this process, identity becomes more than ever a matter of the personal selection of self-image. Increasingly, individuals are obliged to choose their identities.

1.3.1 Supply and demand influences—a summary

From the foregoing it can be seen that the impetus for food and wine trails comes from both sides of the demand-supply equation. Summarising the broad thrusts of this approach from the demand side, there is:

- i. developing interest in food, wine and culinary tourism in general and as a means of individual and social identity;

- ii. a concomitant increase in difference in food and wine, ie. an interest in foodstuffs outside the standardised food chains;
- iii. a growing concern over food provenance and matters of quality;
- iv. developing unease about food health and safety;
- v. greater awareness of environmental issues and ethical standards in food production.
(Fitzgerald & Hugh 2001; James & Burton 2003; Lamine 2005; Morris & Buller 2003)

On the supply side there seems to be:

- i. growing uncertainty over the future of farms, and food production;
- ii. declining profitability in some areas of agriculture;
- iii. a change in orientation from production to consumption;
- iv. changing land use patterns;
- v. an increasing interest in alternative food networks and other means of selling produce.
(Beer 2000; Gralton & Vanclay 2005; Gray & Lawrence 2000; Pritchard & McManus 2000)

The appearance of food and wine trails thus coincides with two separate developments. First, the onset of rural change and uncertainty. Then, there has been changing consumer interests and preferences within a socio-cultural milieu that privileges food and wine as signifiers of identity and difference. Trails thus seem to be a response to a unique set of socio-cultural and economic circumstances—but they have yet to be subjected to serious study.

1.4 Trails as tourist attractors

To date the Introduction has focused on food, wine, tourism and the impetus to the development of food and wine trails. As indicated earlier (see section 1.1), the concept of a trail also needs elaboration because trails seem to have considerable resonance in human history. This factor may also contribute to contemporary tourist dispositions. For Turnbull (2007), humans have an almost primordial affinity with trails. Along with stories (an element that will be elaborated later), he suggests trails may have been among the earliest human artifacts. They are so closely associated with primates that trails may well have been the means through which human cerebration advanced. Turnbull supposes that early humans, incising trails into their environment in search of food, simultaneously scored the importance of trails into their developing consciousness. Superficial support is given to this idea through language. The concept of hodology, the formal study of pathways, implicates both geographical tracks and the neuronal pathways of the human brain. Evolutionary studies of landscape appreciation further support the deep significance of trails and pathways. People may well be drawn to vistas that contain paths or roads that bend around hills, meandering

streams or partially impeded views. These suggest something to be experienced. An almost inherent emotional attraction is implied; one that stimulates the traveler to want to venture further in search of information and experience (Orians & Heerwagen 1992). Trails appear to carry emotional freight above and beyond their obvious capacity to connect locations.

1.5 Performance factors

To this point the Introduction has outlined the importance of development issues; the potential economic, social and cultural reasons behind the inception of food and wine trails. It is now pertinent to focus briefly on the other important feature of the research, trail performance, and consider the elements potentially central to trail operation. In order to do this it is vital to assess the promise of a food and wine trail, to understand its form and purpose before considering the factors that could affect its function.

To paraphrase Gatti and Incerti (in Brunori & Rossi 2000), a food and wine trail is an itinerary, self-directed or pre-determined, through a well-defined area. The visitor's aim is the exploration and understanding of the products, cuisine and culture of an area. Such exploration is usually carried out in the premises of the producers and/or in the spaces specifically around the production. Such an itinerary will also include reference to accommodation and cultural attractions that meet the needs of the tourist for food, rest, recreation and further understanding and aesthetic appreciation of the region.

Such an expansive understanding will be reviewed during the course of this research. But, accepting it as a starting point, it can be assumed that trails are essentially a tourism product, specifically an itinerary product. Thus a trail is a product made up of various elements that need to be amalgamated if it is to perform properly, if it is to be attractive to tourists. While this might differ from trail to trail and country to country there are a number of elements in this descriptor that would seem basic. First, the nature of the product; what is the product of a food and wine trail? Is it the food, the wine or something else entirely? Other elements from this descriptor, posed in the form of issues, and which will be considered further within this thesis, are;

the nature of itinerary; length, composition, number of venues and whether it should be pre-determined or self-directed?
regional cuisine, regional culture and aesthetic appreciation. Does Australia have regions that are relevant? Or are they areas? What would be the themes? exploration and understanding. How are these to be incorporated?

Inferred in such a descriptor are other elements such as advertising and the work of coordination. How are these to be accomplished? When the descriptor proposes that trail activities are largely carried out in the premises of the producer, what does that imply for the venue, amenities and staffing? These are structural, operational and managerial issues that will be considered throughout the thesis.

A main purpose of the research is to determine the important performance factors, the elements that have to be understood in order for a trail to be fully comprehended. These have been raised here in order to introduce the issue, one that will be taken up more thoroughly in Chapter Three, the second chapter of the Literature Review which follows.

1.6 Research objectives

To recap; the research will identify and analyse the factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails and provide greater understanding of the nature and importance of food and wine trails in Australia. The problem is that research on this subject is scant and greater awareness is necessary if such phenomena are to be understood, encouraged and assisted. Renting et al. (2003) suggest that new food supply chain configurations such as trails form a crucial part of contemporary food and marketing strategies. Furthermore, there is a need for an improved 'toolbox' (2003, p. 394) through which phenomena such as food and wine trails can be comprehended. This research aims to provide tools for that 'toolbox', mechanisms through which food and wine trails can be more clearly understood. The research objectives are thus:

Research objective 1: establish the principal factors involved in the development of food and wine trails in Australia.

Research objective 2: determine the principal factors affecting the performance of food and wine trails in Australia.

Research objective 3: assess the economic and tourism importance of food and wine trails and elaborate upon their critical components.

Research objective 4: develop an awareness of the demography and expectations of tourist-consumers on food and wine trails.

Research objective 5: provide a schematic framework through which food and wine trails can be understood.

At this point there is little or no knowledge about food and wine trails in Australia. This research will have both theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical questions relate to the meanings given to trail development and performance by business principals, tourists and others. This understanding will then enable practical action that could help in the future development of trails. But in developing this understanding and establishing this framework it will be necessary to comprehend the social, cultural and economic environment within which trails operate. It will also be necessary to understand aspects related to their formation, management (including aims and values) and their operating structures and functions as they are seen to impact upon performance.

As has been said, food and wine trails seem to have the capacity to improve local economic performance through increased production and enhanced tourism. They do this by providing products and services in settings attractive to tourists, and to those for whom food and wine hold special values. They are thus amenable to ‘new’ consumers (Lewis & Bridger 2001), those in search of quality, sustainable produce who may well be prepared to pay more for engagement and experience. The potential exists for food and wine trail businesses to improve the production and sale of food and wine and to enhance business prospects, promote tourism, retain people in rural areas and improve employment prospects—all actions that can contribute to the success of rural areas. Such ideas essentially reflect the priorities of local and state governments (Tourism Victoria 2002b) and the Australian Government (Department of Industry Tourism and Resources 2003a), all of which express interest in rural areas. For, as Ock (2004, p. 283) observes: ‘rural areas have been the black hole of the knowledge-based economy and information society’.

A schematic diagram of the research follows (Figure 1.1). This is introduced here but the research project will be elaborated upon fully in Chapter Four. The diagram indicates that the research will focus on three basic stakeholder groups. The first being food and wine trail business operators, the people who own or operate businesses on trails. These are the front line personnel dealing with the tourists who choose to visit their premises in response to trail advertising and promotion. They are similarly the people responsible for setting up their premises and staff to receive visitors. They may or may not have been instrumental in setting up the trail, but they do participate in it.

The second group is the tourist-consumers themselves, the men and women who visit the businesses on food and wine trails. There has been prior work on the food and wine tourist,

particularly the wine tourist (Carlsen & Charters 2006; Charters, Steve & Ali-Knight 2002; Hall, C.M. et al. 2002; Hall, CM et al. 2003; Sparks et al. 2005). This research will assess the relevance of this work to food and wine trail tourists and assess their attitudes to the performance of trails. The third group includes those people within the community, some in government or semi-government offices, who would seem to support and encourage the formation of trails. They could be local tourist officials and economic development officers, for example. Such people are charged with the responsibility of encouraging visitation to their areas. The manner in which data will be collected is fully described in Chapter Four.

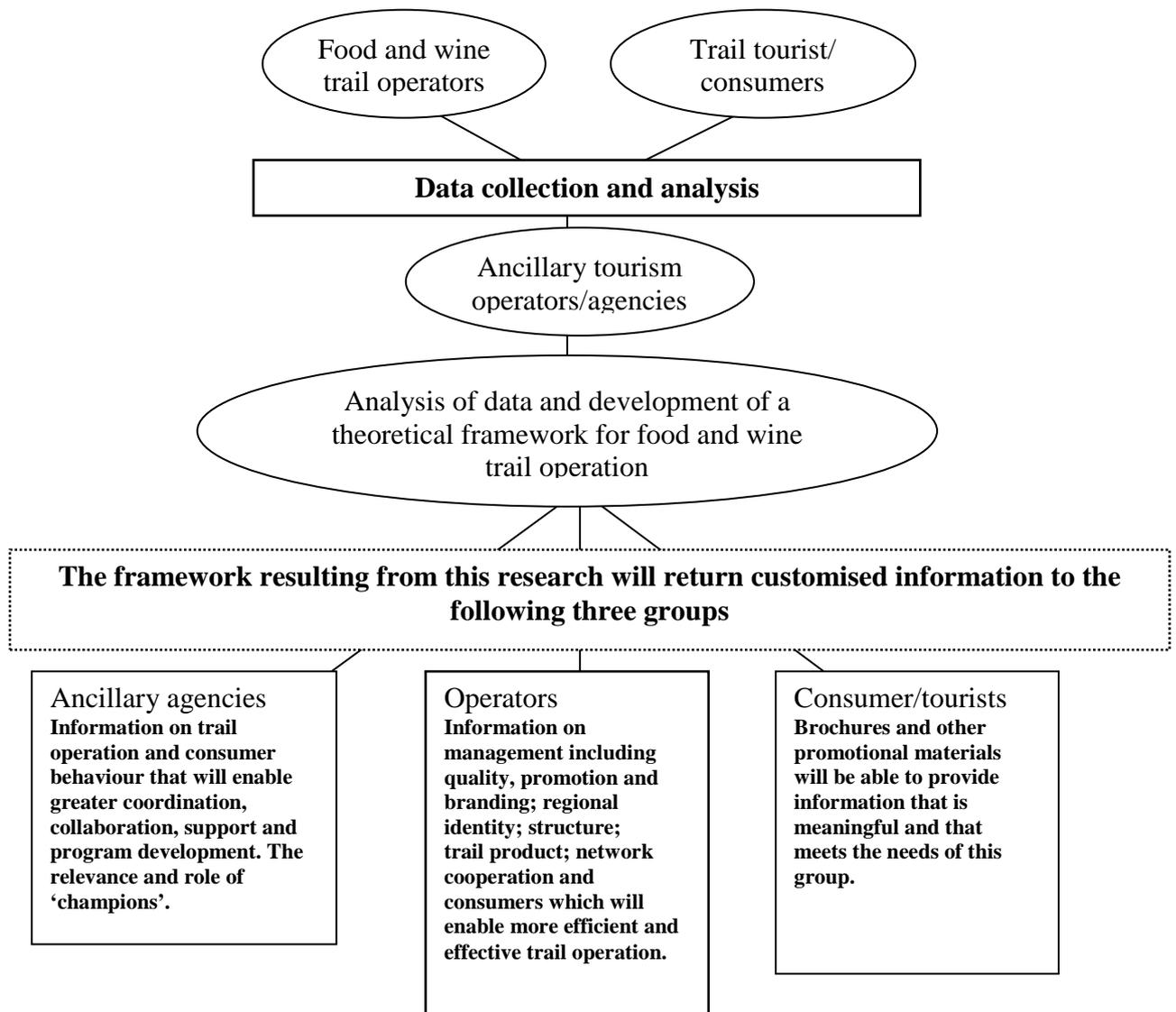


Figure 1.1: Research framework

Data will be collected from the first two stakeholder groups and fed back to the third group for response. A schematic framework will be constructed from which it will be possible to return information to the interested parties as depicted in Figure 1.1.

1.7 Context of the research

Food and wine trails exist Australia-wide. They appear to be largely comparable responses to diverse economic problems. In rural areas as distant from each other as the Hawkesbury region of New South Wales (NSW), Margaret River in Western Australia (W.A.) and Kangaroo Island in South Australia (S.A.), there are food and wine trails. The regions of Australia, however, are not alone in this. Across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand, food and wine trails have been established in gastronomic regions (Hall, C.M. et al. 2002). They have also been developed in South Africa (Bruwer 2003), South America (Schlüter 2002) and Canada (Hashimoto & Telfer 2003). The first such trail was noted in pre-war Germany (Route 2006). Food and wine trails are a relatively modern phenomenon, however, and although little research has been done they appear to be particular responses to changing economic and cultural circumstances. Their individual manifestations, however, could reflect a variety of pressures from producers and consumers living and working in different and changing social, cultural and economic environments (Frochot 2000; Meyer-Czech 2003; Meyer 2004). This needs to be better understood.

In Australia, food and wine trails are widespread if not overly numerous. There are food and wine trails in the Barossa Valley and Fleurieu Peninsula of South Australia, the Swan River and Margaret River valleys of Western Australia, the Hawkesbury and Hunter regions of New South Wales, and near the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). They exist within rural Victoria and Tasmania as well. Such growth largely mirrors the incidence of trails overseas. The German Wine Route, which commenced in the 1930s, is believed to have been the first (Route 2006). But more latterly trail development has taken place in New World countries from Argentina (Schlüter 2002) and Mexico (Bernard, Dominguez & Zaragosa 1999) to South Africa (Bruwer 2003), the United States of America (USA) and Canada (Hashimoto & Telfer 2003). The advent of such trails, and their success, has been attributed to the enthusiasm for food and wine tourism, evident in the last 20 years of the twentieth century but even more pronounced since the turn of the millennium (Deneault 2002; Long 2004b; Wolf 2002). As previously mentioned, food and wine trails are widespread in Australia if not numerous. As a result it is proposed to undertake research in three states in order to gain a breadth of appreciation. The states are Victoria, New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (S.A.). These particular states have been chosen because they represent the most significant food and wine bowl regions of Australia. Moreover, they are states that have

given food and wine considerable priority in the development of their economies through tourism and primary production. The three states chosen represent diversity in their climate, geography, history and culture as indicated by Saunders (2004, pp. 318-9):

Victoria runs from nicely warm zones in the northwest of the state like Mildura to very warm parts in the east like Rutherglen, through to cooler zones like the Yarra Valley east of Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula south of that city. ... South Australia is best known for the Barossa Valley northeast of Adelaide [which] ... enjoys a busy tourist trade and offers suitable hospitality and some decent restaurants to those inclined to relax for a day or two among the wine-oriented towns like Tanunda and Nuriootpa, steeped in history and reflecting the Germanic roots of its settlers. New South Wales has the historical Hunter region.

The particular trails chosen for research were decided upon after consideration of the trails available within the states of Victoria, NSW and S.A. A number of factors implicit in the earlier part of this chapter (see sections 1.2 & 1.3) were also considered; namely that trails are both food and wine trails, in rural areas and potentially within strong touristed and non-touristed areas. These matters will be taken up further in chapters Two and Four.

It was believed that choosing trails within these parameters would give sufficient scope to the research a factor that will be expanded upon in Chapter Four.

1.8 Thesis structure

Chapter One: Introduction	1.1 Food, wine, tourism and trails
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	1.2 The significance of food and wine trails
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two	1.3 Inception of F&W trails
Chapter Four: Research methodology	1.4 Trails as tourist attractors
Chapter Five: Findings	1.5 Performance factors
Chapter Six: Conclusion	1.6 Research objectives
	1.7 Context of the research
	1.8 Thesis structure
References and Appendices	1.9 Conclusion

This thesis is presented in six chapters: an introduction, two literature review chapters, a research methodology chapter, a chapter on findings and a discussion leading to conclusions based upon the research objectives. The thesis closes with an extensive bibliography and a set of appendices. This first chapter has provided an introduction to the significance of trails and outlined the possible reasons for their development. It has given an insight into the

factors that could affect performance as well. The Introduction has also elaborated upon the objectives and context of the research and provided a base for the review of literature that follows.

The Literature Review has been divided into two chapters in order to improve readability and reflect the principal aims of the thesis; that is, to identify and analyse the factors critical to both the development and the performance of food and wine trails. Hence, Chapter Two will look at the literature pertaining to development matters whereas Chapter Three will consider prior work related to trail performance. Chapter Four elaborates upon the research methodology and justifies the choice of methods, subjects and trails. It also explains the research process undertaken. Chapter Five details the findings of the research. The final chapter looks at the findings in the light of the research objectives. The thesis concludes with a comprehensive bibliography and a set of appendices that includes examples of the research instruments.

1.9 Conclusion

Food and wine trails are not well researched in Australia. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to understand the factors important to their development, performance and, hence, relevance. The Introduction has presented the concept, context and significance of food and wine trails. It has also highlighted the main supply and demand issues relevant to the development of trails while reinforcing their significance. The changing values associated with food and wine were illustrated. While retaining their instrumental use, food and wine are now a symbol of social identity. They are also a focus for tourism in their own right. The concept of alternative food networks was raised in order that food and wine trails could be understood as a means by which primary producers seek other ways of marketing their produce. The contribution of food and wine to individual business revenues and regional economies more broadly was also explained.

Potential performance factors were then introduced. It has been noted that to understand the performance of trails it will be necessary to interview business principals, tourists and other interested stakeholders. A rationale for the particular trails chosen was then put forward. It was proposed that it will be necessary to comprehend the environment within which trails operate. It will also be necessary to understand aspects related to the structure, operation and

management of trails, including their aims, values, presentation, staffing and facilities as they are seen to impact upon performance. This then is the research context.

In order to begin the research process, however, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review into the food and wine trail phenomenon so as to provide further context and meaning for the study and to identify the appropriate dimensions for research. The literature review follows in the next two chapters.

Chapter Two: Literature Review, Part 1

Chapter One: Introduction	2.1 Introduction
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	2.2 External environment
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two	2.2.1 Rural change
Chapter Four: Research methodology	2.2.2 Increases in regulation
Chapter Five: Findings	2.2.3 Grapes and wine
Chapter Six: Conclusion	2.2.4 The drive to alternatives
References and Appendices	2.2.5 Importance of alternative food networks
	2.2.6 New quality conventions
	2.2.7 Impacts of developments within tourism
	2.2.8 Changing role of government
	2.2.9 External environment; summary of critical factors to date

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One established the context for research into factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails. The intent of the review of literature is to examine prior research and theory in order to identify potential development factors (this chapter) and performance factors (Chapter Three). Identifying such aspects is necessary in order to establish the approach of the research and develop an appropriate methodology (Chapter Four).

Specific literature on food and wine trails is diverse in source and content, if limited in volume. It is also largely non-Australian. The origins of modern food and wine trails are in Europe and appear to go back at least to the 1930s (German Wine Route 2003). A range of European literature exists (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Brunori & Rossi 2000; Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004; Frochot 2000; Gatti & Incerti 1997; Meyer-Czech 2003, 2005; Tzimitra-Kalogianni et al. 1999). Much of this work, however, is written on wine trails as opposed to trails where both food and wine are featured. Literature on aspects of wine tourism as a separate topic is considerable both in Australia and overseas (the following references are indicative rather than complete: Beames 2003; Carlsen 2004; Gatti & Maroni 2004; Getz 1998, 2000; Hall, C.M. et al. 2002; Jaffe & Pasternak 2004; Les Etapes du Cognac 2007; Macionis & Cambourne 2000; Mitchell, Hall & McIntosh 2000; O'Mahony et al. 2006). The literature on food tourism as a separate entity

is not extensive although diverse aspects of it have been considered (see, for instance Boniface 2003; Frochot 2003; Grihault & Koya 2004; Hall, CM et al. 2003; Handszuh 2000; Henderson 2009; Hjalager 2004; Ignatov & Smith 2006).

Literature on food and wine trails from other parts of the world exists and is expanding (see, for instance, Bernard, Dominguez & Zaragosa 1999; Bruwer 2003; Hashimoto & Telfer 2003; Jaffe & Pasternak 2004; Meyer 2004; Nowers, Villiers & Myburgh 2002; Plummer et al. 2005; Plummer, Telfer & Hashimoto 2006; Schlüter 2002; Telfer 2001a, 2001b). The contribution by Meyer (2004) relates to pro-poor heritage trails in Africa but appears to have implications for food and wine trails more broadly. Specific Australian contributions to the literature on food and wine trails are limited but nonetheless significant. They comprise conference presentations (Faithorn 2003; Knowd 2003a; Mason, O'Mahony & Deery 2009), a refereed conference paper (Mason, Deery & O'Mahony 2008), journal articles (Knowd 2003b; Mason & O'Mahony 2007), an unpublished thesis (Mason 2003) and a report (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

Published material on food and wine trails is diverse and developing—but limited and recent. In view of the relative paucity of material on food and wine trails, it was necessary to explore the literature more broadly. This was done so as to locate factors in other disciplines that might contribute to better understanding the phenomenon. A preliminary understanding of trails was established in the Introduction (in particular, see section 1.4). Rural matters seemed quite important to such an understanding. And in this area regional geography, rural change and development, rural sociology, and regionalism seemed significant. Social change, particularly that relating to consumerism and identity choice, seemed crucial as well, as did changes to tourism more broadly. Certainly these areas seemed to be the most appropriate means by which food and wine trails could be understood.

Food and wine trails are essentially rural and peri-urban developments. They are ostensibly tourist phenomena, a means by which primary producers can attract more visitors to their businesses. Change that impacts upon rural areas, therefore, would seem critical to understanding the development and performance of food and wine trails. The main influences appear to be those relating to economic pressures including trade liberalisation and globalisation (Beer et al. 2005; Gray & Lawrence 2000, 2001; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005; Vanclay 2003). Governments also play a part (Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie 2005). There are other influences, in particular those with an impact upon cultural values and the

subsequent effects they have had upon food, wine and tourism (Alejziak 1999; Bell & Valentine 1997; Fagan 1997; Hall, C.M. et al. 2002; Hall, CM et al. 2003; Honeywill 2004). These factors were flagged in the Introduction as was the impact of government policy (Tourism Australia 2005a).

The impact of broader social movements and pressure, however, is met and dealt with locally. Understanding local context is therefore essential to apprehending the reasons behind the development and nature of trails, a uniquely local phenomenon. It is the performance of local people and the means at their disposal—the human, social, physical and cultural capital—to deal with developments within the broader external environment that seem critical (Adler & Kwon 2002; Lee, J et al. 2005; Ray 2000; Shucksmith 2000; Throsby 1999). In coming to grips with this, one of the more significant aspects appears to be the increasing relevance of regional or territorial identity as a response, in part, to the change in attitudes of central authorities towards the needs of rural Australia (Beer et al. 2005; Gray & Lawrence 2001).

This research is about critical factors in two main areas, the development of food and wine trails and the factors that affect their performance. The two previous paragraphs related to development matters. The specific literature on food and wine trails (mainly from Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004; Hashimoto & Telfer 2003; Telfer 2001b) suggests there are three areas that could determine performance. They are, first, management, in particular networking and coordination; secondly, personnel, the importance of skills, attitudes and training and, finally, technology, the physical and social methodologies through which trails achieve their aims.

There will be others but these three stand out from the literature as possible factors. Personnel and management pertain to the people involved in trail businesses, their skills knowledge and attitudes as well as the means of harnessing, directing and coordinating their activities and the work of the trails themselves. Technology refers to the tools, both soft and hard, through which a trail functions. It can include issues such as roads and parking, accommodation, advertising, promotion, signage and the like.

The crossover points between such arbitrarily defined phenomena and their contents will not always be clear-cut; the kind of social change and development implied here does not always yield to neat determinations and distinctions. The factors and related content are proposed

tentatively, therefore, and literature and contents from elsewhere will be considered when deemed pertinent.

Summary to date: This research is aimed at understanding the factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails. Such trails are located principally in rural and peri-urban areas. They are comprised of small businesses, active on their own behalf as independent producers but also involved in tourism. They exist within highly touristed regions yet also operate in areas where tourists are relatively scarce. Like small businesses everywhere, they appear to be dependent on their own hard work. Yet the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the broader economy seems critical to their success as well (Gadenne 1998). They exist within a context of local and regional economic institutions contained in a national and global framework.

There is little prior material on food and wine trails in Australia. What there is suggests their development has been prompted by changes in the social, cultural and economic environment interacting with more local issues. Trail performance, on the other hand, could be affected mainly by management, personnel and technological matters.

Material to follow: A framework was necessary to organise the presentation of materials in this review. It assumes the necessity of understanding both the external and local environments, and the three factors that have been determined as affecting trail performance. Consequently, the material that is available will be organised under the five headings; that is,

- i. External environment
- ii. Local context
- iii. Technology
- iv. Management
- v. Personnel.

The first two items, the external environment and local context, will be discussed further in this chapter. The other three items; technology, management, and personnel, will be elaborated further in Chapter Three.

2.2 External environment

As noted in Chapter One, food and wine trails appear to be rural or peri-urban phenomena largely based upon primary production and designed to attract tourists. Thus changes within rural circumstances—social, economic and political—and developments in contemporary tourism would appear paramount in considering the factors that might impinge upon trail

development and performance. From the literature review the following appear to be the most relevant and influential factors within the external environment.

Rural change (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Lawrence, Knuttila & Gray 2001),
The increasing importance of the culture economy (Ray 2001),
Impact of developments within tourism (Poon 2003; Richards, G 2000),
Changes to the role of government (Beer et al. 2005).

These factors will now be elaborated upon in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of their potential impact upon trail development.

2.2.1 Rural change

The situation facing rural/regional communities appears complex. The literature suggests there are two fundamental and interrelated issues; first, the changes that have overtaken the rural economy and, secondly, the ways this has been dealt with by primary producers and rural communities.

2.2.1.1 Changes to the rural economy

Holmes (2006) proposes that the speed and complexity of rural change has been nothing short of bewildering. The reasons for such change have been contested (Amin & Thrift 1997; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Wiseman 2005b). There is some consensus, however, that they include movements toward market liberalisation, changes to monetary policy that have made the availability of finance more restrictive, tariff reductions, removal of the welfare safety net and privatisation of government services including outsourcing. These are all, ‘... components of the so-called ‘economic rationalist’ policies which accompany neo-liberalism’ (Gray & Lawrence 2000, p. 3).

Further consequences of neo-liberal policies are believed to include the attenuation of public good and community, and the aggrandisement of doctrines such as individual responsibility (Martinez & Garcia 2000). The origins of neo-liberalism appear to lie in parallel policies from the late nineteenth century which emphasised, ‘minimal state regulation of economic interests and ... open trade’ (Gwynne, Klak & Shaw 2003, pp. 3-4).

Developments such as these need to be juxtaposed against the related concept of globalisation, which is believed to be characterised by:

The liberalisation of international trade facilitated by the strengthening of the rules under GATT 1994.
The widening basis of international production as developing countries industrialise, exemplified by the growth of newly industrialising economies.

Developments in communications technology such as the e-revolution, are facilitating rapid improvements in flows of information and of goods and services.

Multinational enterprises are the key agents of international economic activity and coordination as a consequence of the liberalisation of international capital flows, of national investment rules and of international trade

Increasing intensity of international competition between both countries and between firms.

The increasing intensity of interfirm competition is taking place between progressively fewer firms and with growing barriers to entry (Read 2004, p. 366).

The accumulative result of neo-liberal policies and globalisation has made for a highly competitive and globalised marketplace at once unstable and unreliable. Thus, Holmes (2006, p. 145) can say of Australian rural areas in general,

Complexity and variability in time and space is leading to greater heterogeneity in values, goals and uses at all scales: rural holding; locality; topographic unit; 'social landscape'; region; bioclimatic zone; and nation.

This has meant substantive change for primary producers. Once they were suppliers to a rather homogeneous market with support from elaborate state systems as diverse as tariff protection and dedicated departments of agriculture. Now they face unreliable and differentiated markets, little or no support—and uncertain times (Winter, M 2003).

2.2.1.2 Impact upon primary production and rural communities

Uncertainty is widespread. It affects matters as basic as the goals and values of farming (Holmes 2006). Ilbery et al. (2005, p. 116), for instance, note that the role of farmers is now one, '... of providing the materials for food and less and less the delivery of food itself'. Once farmers were assumed to be involved in the production of food, now they are effectively cultivators and breeders of products. This has resulted in a growing detachment between the producers of food and the ultimate end user.

Such change is seen to have fractured the link between producers and consumers, between farmers and those who ultimately eat what they grow. Moreover, farmers receive less financial compensation than they used to. On the one hand this is brought about by increased competition. On the other hand, more and more revenue is appropriated by food processors and the retail sector. Pretty suggests that, '... only an estimated 7.5 percent of the final retail price of food in the UK currently returns to farmers, against a figure of 50 percent over 60 years ago' (Pretty in Ilbery et al. 2005, p. 117). This might not be absolutely identical in Australia but the processes outlined above will have had depressive effects on the incomes of

many Australian farmers as well. Moreover, OECD (2006) statistics indicate that Australian farmers have had to be self-reliant. Whereas 32 per cent of European farm income and 16 per cent of US farm income are government derived, the figure is five per cent in Australia.

The literature suggests that changes such as these have had a significant impact upon rural producers and rural communities (Collits 2004). The relevance to food and wine trails would appear to be those changes connected to the,

- changing control of farms,
- changes to primary production,
- rural communities,
- increases to regulation,
- the changing position of grapes and wine within agriculture.

Such changes, discussed below, have meant that some primary producers have been forced to look to alternatives such as food and wine trails.

At the very least, changes to agricultural practice have meant that Australian mythology is no longer able to sustain the traditional, ‘... bucolic images of the stockman, drover, shearer or swagman [with] disdain for those in positions of authority’ (Hooper 2001, p. 2). The image of an independent entrepreneur labouring stoically in harsh conditions producing vital foodstuffs for an appreciative public is no longer viable. The current view is more one akin to an industrial producer seated in an air-conditioned tractor with computerised controls generating food inputs at the direct behest of agribusiness. Lawrence and Gray (2000) suggest that many such traditional bush myths are no longer feasible. Overall, the effect of change has been to push primary producers closer to the market through engagement with agrifood corporations and the financial organisations they depend upon. A net result of such developments has been subsumption, the loss of control, whole or in part, by farmers of on-farm processes, even their farms (Vanclay 2003). Some elements of farm control have certainly been ceded to agrifood corporation and financial institutions (Lockie, Herbert-Cheshire & Lawrence 2003).

The decline in independence of rural producers is reflective of far more basic shifts within rural areas. There is a change in farming emphasis from production to consumption. This has brought about a widening disconnect between farmers and food, farmers and final consumers, farmers and their communities (Ilbery & Maye 2005). Writing about Europe, Fonte (2002, p. 15) proposes that,

Agriculture no longer produces final products and it loses its links with final consumers. It becomes instead an economic sector producing intermediate

goods for the agro-food industry. Upstream, it loses its link with nature, as techniques are increasingly determined by industrial inputs rather than by seasonal and territorial constraints or by the biological characteristics of the production process and the cultivated species. Inasmuch as the market becomes the relevant place of food provisioning, trade and distribution acquire a prominent role.

This is quite simply explained by Atkins and Bowler (2001). They suggest that contemporary farmers, rather than produce goods for final use, now produce inputs for manufactured foods. During this transition, some primary producers have had to make invidious decisions about their commercial futures in order to maintain living standards. Some have become pluriactive, that is, added value to their basic products through opening up new sidelines such as tourism (Lockie, Herbert-Cheshire & Lawrence 2003) or developing other work forms or businesses. All of which means that,

A growing number of farmers are now prepared to try their luck with alternative forms of production and new forms of marketing, in the conviction that mass food production for their farm no longer provides continuity and sufficient income (Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003, pp. 397-8).

This is not just about changes to farming, however. Such developments have meant parallel changes in the lives and practices of rural communities. Agriculture is both an economic activity and a socio-cultural practice. For, ‘... farming contributes not only economic value to a society but also shapes the way in which some populations live and create an agrarian culture within that society (Liepins & Bradshaw 1999, p. 563).

Changes to rural economies and aspects of farming are bound to impact upon other parts of rural life. This has been referred to by Marsden (1999, p. 507) as the creation of, ‘... new rural geographies of value’, a phrase implying movement away from strict agricultural pre-occupations. Certainly this is the case along the south-eastern littoral of Australia where the value of coastal properties has boomed, creating tension between agricultural producers and those who would see the land used for other needs, particularly residential (Holmes 2002). There are other examples. Some pastoral areas, for instance, have reverted to indigenous use. In other cases they have been subjected to the existence values associated with landscapes, tourism and the environment, Existence values reflect the benefit people receive from knowing that a particular environmental resource such as Uluru (previously Ayers Rock), the Australian Alps or an endangered species, exists (Winter, C 2007). Such values do not necessarily lead to further rounds of capital accumulation. They are not all strongly marketable which has led to the somewhat contradictory outcome identified as more value, less cash (Holmes 2002, p. 366).

As a result, the old rural Australia, one dominated by agriculture, and traditional elites, has yielded to the wider forces now shaping global development.

This is a general process of externalisation of the consumption countryside, one which exhibits a wide range of external relationships and is subject to wide-ranging demands (not least from new residents, developers, tourists, food consumers) (emphases in original, Marsden 1999, p. 506).

Pezzini and Wojan (2001) confirm that there has been a significant trend in rural areas away from places concerned solely with agricultural production towards places of consumption.

Such changes to rural/regional areas have been accompanied by others introduced earlier, specifically,

- declining population growth;
- reduction in agricultural employment;
- ageing populations and the internal migration of younger people, a movement of population away from small rural towns to regional cities;
- the loss of services and built infrastructure,
- economic disadvantage, principally the uneven distribution of wealth in favour of the larger cities;
- environmental degradation caused by forces such as salinity which threatens the actual existence of some farming communities and the economic viability of many (Cocklin & Dibden 2004; Marsden 1999; Stayner 1998).

The above difficulties are not the only ones facing rural communities. They are sufficient to illustrate that change, principally motivated by neo-liberal principles and globalisation, has had far-reaching consequences for rural and regional communities. As has been suggested, and confirmed by Brunori and Rossi (2007), rural areas have been affected by demographic movements of different kinds. Moreover, they are increasingly influenced by the actions of external actors, such as regulatory agencies, businesses, consumers and citizens, as well as the processes pushed by the forces of economic globalisation.

Direct evidence for this was given in a business decision that affected the Ballarat region of Victoria. Ballarat, a large provincial city some 100 kilometres to the west of Melbourne, is the hub of a renowned potato growing area. McDonald's, the transnational fast food chain is well-established in Australia. In 2005 the company chose to source half its fresh (French fry) potato needs from New Zealand, rather than from Australian areas including Ballarat. The decision was cost-based. In response, a local farmer opined,

"They've got to think of the long-term, not the short-term. We've got an ageing grower base, and if we're going to encourage youth into the industry, they've got to give them sort of guarantee as to the future. It's an industry which requires a lot of capital input, and growers won't continue... if they think there's some doubt about where they're going" (Brine 2005, p. 1)

Global enterprises such as McDonald's dominate local trade (Lawrence, Knuttila & Gray 2001). They neither look to the long-term future of local communities nor to the employment of local youth. For as Lockie et al. (2003) make clear, the global standardisation of the French fry enables such companies to move operations to wherever growers can provide the cheapest russet burbanks, the potato species used for French fries. This allows them to play farmers around the world off against each other when negotiating prices.

Conventional food supply chains are highly standardised with requirements largely determined by retailers such as McDonald's or, in some cases, government agencies. They generally set low returns for growers with apparent disregard for the impact of such decisions. As Urry (2003, p. 5) confirms, with particular regard to transnational corporations (TNCs), they, '... operate on a worldwide basis and often lack any long-term commitment to particular places, labour forces or even societies'.

All this supports Marsden's (1999) comment about the creation of new geographies of value. Agriculture, once a standard by which rural success could be assessed, is no longer the barometer by which it is measured (Budge 2005). Rural and regional areas can no longer be simple custodians of agricultural continuity (Lawrence, Knuttila & Gray 2001). Global, local and national forces exemplified by the Ballarat potato example create no certainty for farmers, or for regions. Traditional agriculture appears to have no prized status that will enable it to be maintained forever.

To complicate matters in Australia, as Gerritson (2000) points out, these changes have occurred without the parallel growth in agricultural protectionism that took place in the USA and Europe. Protective mechanisms in Australia were weakened or removed. Once there was an egg board, a potato board or other regulatory agencies that protected producer incomes by stabilising commodity prices. Now there are few. They have been removed because the advocates of free trade generally argued that the removal of such marketing authorities would contribute to easier movement of the factors of production and thus provide greater economic benefits (Pritchard 2000). Free market forces appear dominant and producers have had to fall in line or make alternative arrangements

2.2.2 Increases in regulation

The demise of protective regulatory agencies notwithstanding, regulatory requirements have advanced. In describing the cheese industry in Victoria, for instance, Tolra (2006, p. 8) colourfully comments that,

The tight controls placed on this volatile industry by regulators and food safety experts, and the high cost of regulatory compliance, have often acted like a too-cool chiller, slowing down what many would describe as the industry's attempts at maturation.

The problem of food safety alluded to here has further eroded consumer confidence and led to even greater concern about food safety and regulation. The affects of recent outbreaks of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), salmonella and foot and mouth disease have been devastating (Henson & Mazzocchi 2002; Ilbery & Maye 2005). As Holm (2003, p. 537) morbidly observes, '... many individuals' reflections about food are pervaded by the idea that modern industrial production and processing methods carry unwanted consequences with them that existing safety systems cannot predict'. There are also other aspects that have furthered regulation in Australia. Foremost among these have been the increasing importance of environmental matters, the persistence of the drought and its impact on water rights, and the pressure to recognise Aboriginal native title in Australia's rangelands (Argent 2002).

Thus, reduced protection, greater regulation and intense competition (as well as climate change difficulties) have altered the importance of traditional products and consequently the economic and power elite within communities.

2.2.3 Grapes and wine

Before turning to literature that appears to comprise some form of rejoinder to the problems within rural areas it is necessary to consider the particular situation of vignerons, the grape-growing component of food and wine trails. The recent trajectory of the wine/grape industry does not appear to be quite the same as that of other primary producers although in a broader sense they have all been affected by the changes outlined.

The position of wine at a world level is challenging. Grapes are vulnerable to disease and the bottled product susceptible to fads in taste. The sector is everywhere competitive and in perpetual flux (Bouzdine-Chameeva 2006). Wine is a globalised industry with problems largely related to over-production combined with relatively flat consumer demand world-wide. In the early years of the twenty first century Australia, '...had a surplus of 900 million litres of wine—enough to fill 300 Olympic swimming pools or pour 7.5 billion standard

glasses' (Speedy 2006, p. 12). The reasons for such excess were straightforward. A surge in Australian wine exports in the 1990s saw grape growers plant many new vines. This was encouraged by government taxation changes which privileged premium grape production. This ultimately led to a surplus of grapes, red in particular, and a subsequent fall in red wine prices (Webb & Gregory 2005). Surplus grapes in declining markets were a reality, and a recipe for depressed incomes, although this impacted more upon smaller growers (Port 2006b). This problem was further complicated by the onset of the global financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent rise in value of the Australian dollar. Difficulties in competing for supermarket shelf space, as well as sales and price discounting, only compounded the problem. Ongoing drought in the early part of the twenty first century further complicated the situation for some although a projected reduction in supply could eventually help to resolve the surplus problem.

Nevertheless, such difficulties appear to have boosted tourism as a means of maintaining vineyard revenue. A recent report proposed that, '... this phenomenon [wine tourism] is funded as much by economic imperatives as a desire to offer tourism in its own right' (Kronos Corporate 2002, p. 9). In other words, producers are driven to sell product by any means. Tourism is but one of those means although the commitment to it might not be that substantial, a point that will be taken up later. Tourism and tourism routes do offer wineries the opportunity for product sales. At the same time they readily accommodate visitors who are increasingly interested in trying new things (Meyer 2004). Consequently, growth in wine tourism has been such that between 2002 and 2005 visitor numbers at Victorian wineries, for example, went from 3.2 million visits per annum to 3.6 million per annum (Tourism Australia 2005b).

Summary of sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.3: Australian rural areas were once relatively homogeneous and stable with predictable and reliable markets. This is no longer the case. Changes to the global economic system have exposed primary producers to vastly altered circumstances resulting in economic and social instability and uncertain incomes. Wineries have undergone a somewhat parallel trajectory that has resulted in similar disequilibrium. Included in such change is a movement away from a focus on production to one of consumption. At the same time regulation has increased and protective mechanisms reduced. In such changed conditions a number of rural producers have begun to look for economic

alternatives, options that include consumer-based activities such as tourism and, with that, the possibility of involvement within food and wine trails.

2.2.4 The drive to alternatives

European Australia began as a colonial economy providing Great Britain with bulk staples such as wheat, sheep-meat and wool (Lawrence, Knuttila & Gray 2001). In the second half of the twentieth century this protected market system collapsed. Initially this was brought about by the establishment of the European Economic Community and its privileged internal market system. The onset of neo-liberalist practices and globalisation also contributed. This wrought massive change—but the effects have been uneven (Lawrence, Knuttila & Gray 2001). There has been great spatial differentiation. Some regions have prospered, others have not. Beer et al. (2003) suggest that growth was enhanced where local commodities were in demand on world markets—wine grapes, some vegetables, forestry products, for instance. By contrast regions that relied upon traditional broad acre production of cereals or sheep for wool suffered. Those areas able to identify and secure niche markets have prospered. Those reliant on mass production at the lowest cost have been confronted with more difficult times. Mainstream agriculture continues to remain influential in Australia. This is especially in areas where broad-acre farming has powerful and traditional antecedents and where the products of such agriculture remain profitable and sustainable (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003). Such production is increasingly at risk from worldwide competition that has the effect of both cheapening imports into the domestic market and providing sharp opposition within the international market (Fagan 1997). This was illustrated in the Ballarat potato example cited previously (see section 2.2.1). But change is almost endemic; changes to power structures, beliefs and land values as has been indicated. This has been a massive transformation which climate change now seems to be further complicating. Many primary producers have been driven to other means to promote and sell their products.

Looking at these changes from the food and wine production standpoint, a preoccupation of rural and regional areas, it is possible to identify the following differences from the quite recent past. First, there is a greater concern for food quality and presentation. Communities have become further exposed due to the progressive withdrawal of state subsidies from agriculture including the reduction of protective tariff barriers. Moreover, food is now produced within an increasingly competitive market, domestically and internationally. There

is greater concern for environmental regulation and heightened interest in more sustainable agriculture (Ilbery & Bowler 1998; Ilbery & Kneafsey 1998).

A Tasmanian report suggested that such changes create, ‘... an opportunity for specialist growers and farmers markets’ (Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment 2005, p. 20). Food markets appear to be differentiating along socially constructed criteria. Yet supermarkets still dominate. In 2002, the National Association of Retail Grocers of Australia estimated that Woolworths and Coles, the two dominant supermarket chains, had a combined market share of 76 percent. On these figures Australia has one of the most concentrated retail food sectors in the developed world (Jacenko & Gunasekera 2005).

Yet there are some consumers who appear to be seeking improved food quality with less chemical usage, greater freshness and fewer technological processes such as genetic modification. Moreover, they will look for them in ways external to the dominant supermarkets. This can be restated by suggesting that,

... due to concerns about environmental and human health, the number of consumers rejecting mass-produced food and calling for seasonally available foods, regional cuisines, organic products, and environmentally and socially sustainable food is growing ... those in alternative food movements are disengaging from the power of distant actors to shape their local food system (Selfa & Qazi 2005, p. 452).

To this point the changes to the rural economy, rural production and rural communities have been reviewed. However, food and wine trails are also affected by social, cultural and economic factors extraneous to those directly impacting rural/regional areas. They will be addressed shortly. Before turning to them it is proposed to briefly consider changes to the general methods, processes, practices and values through which rural areas have begun to deal with the issues outlined. This will include whatever impact that might have upon the development of food and wine trails. The following sectors of the Literature Review will consider, first, the importance of alternative food networks, second, aspects of trust and regard and, finally, new quality conventions.

2.2.5 Importance of alternative food networks

The development of alternative food networks was canvassed in the Introduction to this thesis (see section 1.3) with particular reference to demand and supply matters that have stimulated their development. Alternative food networks have also been referred to as local or short food supply chains. The next section uses the latter nomenclature in order to maintain consistency with the literature at this point.

Food supply chains, long and short, refer to the numerous procedural stages through which food is produced and consumed (Marsden, Murdoch & Morgan 1999). This can include producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. From farm gate to plate (Source UK 2006), farm to fork (Parrot, Wilson & Murdoch 2002) and from land to mouth (Kneen 1993) have been other summary descriptors. Over the years, food supply chains have been getting longer. ‘Very rarely is a foodstuff produced, processed, distributed and consumed by persons living in the same region. More likely, food supply chains link actors in different regions or even in different continents’ (Penker 2006, p. 368). This growing food chain length, and associated increased costs, appears to be ever more problematic as La Trobe and Acott (2000, pp. 309-10) point out,

The distance between food producers and consumers is widening ... this drive for intensification and globalisation of food systems has not been cheap—there have been serious environmental, social and economic costs incurred as a result of these combined processes.

Short food supply chains are thus considered more sustainable. They are understood to sidestep conventional supply chains and provide more direct linkages between producer and consumer. They do this by decreasing food miles and giving clear indications as to origin and quality of food. Short food supply chains are believed to have other attributes as well. They are generally seen as a means of getting biodiversity from farm to plate, of saving energy, improving producer remuneration, re-establishing trust between producers and consumers, improving civic responsibility, maintaining local food knowledge and retaining economic value in the community (Andrée et al. 2007; Ilbery & Maye 2005; Morris & Buller 2003).

The assumption that all short food supply chains are sustainable and conform to the above features is questioned by Ilbery and Maye (2005). What is more, Watts et al. (2005) suggest that there is really nothing new about short food supply chains. They simply preceded the now internationalised food supply chains in their growth, and have not been entirely displaced by them.

Ilbery and Maye (2005) concluded that some alternative food supply networks are best characterised as hybrid spaces. They did so because the enterprises they studied appeared to remain dependent on commercial chains and other means of product sale in order to survive. They noted that producers worked with both short and long, standard and alternative food networks. The authors caution about attributing alternative ideologies to such enterprises. Inevitably producers participate in alternative food networks because it is a smart economic

proposition to be so. Andrée et al.(2007) comment on this reality in Australia by suggesting that farmers adopt whatever alternative practices best get them around the particular link in the supply chain that they wish to circumvent. Ideology might not be relevant. As a result of this and other critical opinion (for instance, Holloway et al. 2007; Sonnino & Marsden 2006), Andrée et al. (2007) propose five caveats about theorising alternative food networks.

- i. Alternative food networks are not necessarily ideologically driven.
- ii. Alternative food networks are sometimes complementary to and/or competitive with conventional food supply chains and other commercial methods.
- iii. All food networks are embedded in some way and each case requires analysis in order to be understood.
- iv. 'If there is a defining feature of truly "alternative" food networks, it is that they present opposition or resistance to the power relations of conventional food systems' (Andrée et al. 2007, p. 4), but this varies with each case.
- v. Alternative food networks are socially constructed and it is necessary to understand the discourses and practices of the people involved in them.

These points constitute themes of this research.

Contention over short food supply chains is apparent. Nevertheless, Marsden et al. (2000) recognise three types. First, they propose Face to Face, where consumers buy a product direct from the producer at a farm shop, farmers' market or the like. In such circumstances, 'authenticity and trust are mediated through personal interaction' (Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003, p. 400). Second, they nominate Spatially Proximate, where products are sold through local stores or outlets and consumers are made 'aware of the 'local' nature of the product at the point of retail' (2003, p. 400). Finally, they suggest Spatially Extended, where the products are directed to consumers at a site outside the local area who may have little or no knowledge of their provenance.

Under examples of proximate short food supply chains, Renting et al. (2003, p. 399) specifically cite 'thematic routes (articulation in space)' and 'tourist enterprises', directly linking food and wine trails and short food supply chains. However, food and wine trails also provide for face-to-face interaction between consumers and producers and would thus appear to qualify as short food supply chains on more than one of the grounds identified by Renting et al (2003).

Research on alternative food networks in Australia (Andrée et al. 2007) suggests that primary producers engage in them for three main reasons. First, smaller producers, in particular, find that they cannot engage economically in conventional chains. Alternative

food networks, by removing the middle men, capture greater value. Second, primary producers working with alternative food networks can establish their own quality parameters and are therefore not reliant on supermarkets or other agencies. This can also apply to product type as supermarkets, in particular, can be restrictive in the types of product they will accept, as well as the quality. Finally, decisions relating to environmental conditions can be taken by the primary producers. Such initiatives are not normally rewarded by conventional systems. These three points suggest the importance of the retention of control, an element at risk according to the discussion earlier in this literature review.

As suggested earlier in this section, a food and wine trail can be at once a short food supply chain and an alternative food network. The nomenclature seems almost interchangeable. A food and wine trail is one of a number of means through which primary producers can choose to extend their business activities in order to stay solvent. The choice as to the type of alternative food network is largely dependent, as Andrée et al. (2007) suggest, on the particular aspect of conventional food chains they wish to circumvent. The decision can also be located in economic theorising more broadly.

2.2.5.1 Economies of scope and synergy

For, in discussing the relevance of short food supply chains to lagging European regions, Ilbery et al. (2004) highlight their importance in shifting the focus from economies of scale towards economies of scope and synergy. Economy of scope refers to diversification of the type of products and services that an agricultural business can offer. According to Marsden et al. (2002), farmers can create interlinked but different products and services using the same physical, social or knowledge resource bases they utilise in their regular businesses. This leads to economies of scope, not economies simply based upon scale. This includes agritourism (including food and wine trails), landscape and wildlife preservation, high quality niche production, organic farming and the like (van der Ploeg et al. 2000). Such processes contrast with economies of scale approach typical of food production systems within large areas of Australia. The latter system promotes greater efficiency and profit margins through capitalisation, larger size, increased mechanisation, reduced use of labour, specialisation and the enhanced use of technology (Marsden, Banks & Bristow 2002; Parrot, Wilson & Murdoch 2002).

Economies of synergy appear two-fold; first, there are links with other activities on the agricultural property and, secondly, connections can be developed between the business' interests and the activities of the broader regional sphere. As Clark (2005) says,

... agro-food diversification must reinforce on-farm activities, and thereby support business reproduction strategies. Secondly there needs to be synergies between these reproduction strategies and the imperatives of territorial development more generally (2005, p. 479).

Thus there is the potential for synergy among local businesses interested in similar issues. This could be collaboration on a food and wine trail. Synergy also implies involvement with local/regional economic policies that could be supportive of tourism. For example, if a region were being promoted as a food and wine destination, it would make sense for local food and wine businesses to capitalise upon that by tailoring their activities to suit.

There is debate about some aspects of short food supply chains, in particular the food miles travelled (Ilbery & Maye 2005). Yet there appears general agreement that it is not so much the distance over which the product is transported that is critical but rather the information shared in the process. Renting et al. (2003) suggest it is the value-laden information that is important; the messages embedded in the product and processes when it reaches the consumer. This could be printed on packaging or verbally communicated at the point of retail. However it occurs, it connects the consumer with the place or space of production and, potentially, with the values of the people and the production methods employed.

Embedded information is a crucial characteristic of short food supply chains that enables the fixing of product to place. This encourages a stronger territorial or local focus and potential closer ties between locally-based producers, consumers and other actors within the sector (Ilbery & Bowler 1998; Ilbery & Kneafsey 1998). The exchange of value-laden information can be achieved in different ways; through effective labelling, the use of supplementary documentation, brochures, DVDs, posters, photographs, access to websites and the like.

2.2.5.2 Aspects of trust and regard

It is these exchange points, information-driven interactions between people about food that are assuming new importance. Such interactions are stimulated by both the changes reviewed and by more insistent, evolving consumer demand. Modern consumers are not always satisfied with what they know about food, nor with the information that is distributed to reassure them (Verbeke 2005). Moreover, such information is often seen to be contradictory (Klanten et al. 2008).

Up until recently routine consumption practices appear to have been based on certain widely-held assumptions—a belief in the integrity of food, for instance. Yet as Beck points out, ‘... many things that were once considered universally certain and safe and vouched for by every conceivable authority turn out to be deadly’ (Beck in Murdoch & Miele 2004b, p. 161); the rise in salmonella outbreaks for instance. Consumers thus seek reassurances. They seek more product information but also try to re-establish older connections—consumer with producer—in order to confirm the quality of their food. In the quest for such reassurance Marsden et al. (2000) suggest that different relationships, different conventions and interpretations of quality might well be activated. It is such matters that will be turned to now.

The changing nature of the producer-consumer relationship seems to be characterised by a willingness to look beyond mainstream economic principles—particularly those that just equate value with price. Lee (2000), for instance, after studying a range of horticultural businesses in England, argued that it was possible to identify places of production within the market that were inconsistent with the general monetary values of capitalism. They were apparently spaces of non-capitalist production operating within a capitalist framework. Their existence was sustained by the interest and support brought about by the interaction of informed and passionate producers and consumers.

Lee understood some of the horticultural businesses he studied to be financially unviable, yet they continued to function. Why? What Lee found was that participants on both sides of the market—buyers and sellers alike—valued the interpersonal relationships. They liked the interactions, the sharing of enjoyment, enthusiasm, knowledge and friendship as well as the opportunity to understand more about whatever goods and services were being traded (Lee, R 2000). It was the interactions that were valued; the potential for engagement with others in meaningful dialogue over topics of mutual interest.

Such transactions are considered part of an economy of regard, a term derived from Offer (1997) but initially inspired by Karl Polanyi (1985), a post-war polymath with interests in economics and philosophy. Polanyi wrote that, ‘the human economy ... is embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and non-economic. The inclusion of the non-economic is vital’ (Polanyi in Hinrichs 2000, p. 296). Monetary exchange is not everything. Interpersonal regard is seen as one of the key non-economic factors. The contemporary enthusiasm for embeddedness is derived from Polanyi. By it is understood that economic behaviour is both

set in and mediated by a complex web of social relations. It is not just a value-for-money exchange. Embeddedness has become an almost formulaic reference for the social ties that are assumed to influence and augment economic exchanges (Hinrichs 2000). Sage (2003b), for instance, reinforces the significance of embeddedness and sees mutual regard as one of the non-economic dimensions at work in an alternative good food network in south-west Ireland.

Hinrichs (2000, p. 295) suggests that the reason schemes such as farmers' markets and other alternative food networks are popular is that,

They strike a popular nerve, for the apparent novelty now of farmers and consumers interacting, perhaps addressing one another by name, even knowing small details of one another's lives. [They] promise human connection at the place where production and consumption of food converge, an experience not available to consumers shopping at "superstores" or "hypermarkets" or to farmers selling through conventional wholesale commodity markets.

Hinrichs (2000) believes that embeddedness is central to the success of alternative food networks. She cautions against trying to capture alternative food networks only through the lens of sustainable agriculture which has usually been the focus. People are attracted as much or more by the personal interactions as they are by the provisions of sustainability.

Information exchanges such as those in alternative food networks do not have to one-to-one, however. A similar effect can be achieved through more formalised approaches. These include activities such as factory, farm or shop tours where retired employees serve as guides; their personal experiences enriching the story of the company and its products (Augustyn 2000). All such interactions seem to thrive on casual but meaningful dialogue between the buyer and the seller over the health, history, background, provenance and potential of the product. For example, the Noosa Food Trail (located in a sought after amenity area on the Pacific coast north of Brisbane in Queensland) brochure suggests that the trail, '... encourages a return to the traditional methods of shopping—speaking to growers and producers to gain insights into how things are grown and purchasing and consuming produce in season' (Tourism Noosa 2005).

Superficially, more benefit would seem to accrue to the consumer than the producer in such interactions. However, O'Reilly and Haines (2004), in considering the reasons why food producers would want to interact with consumers directly, thought that it might provide useful customer feedback as well as being a valuable social experience. The social values

appear mutual. While supporting the significance of embeddedness, Sage (2003a; 2003b) nevertheless cautions about the assumption that good personal relationships between producers and consumers are all that is necessary to maintain businesses and sustain livelihoods. Business savvy appears necessary as well. In this Sage might deviate somewhat from Lee (2000), but he would probably concur with Hinrichs (2000, p. 301) who asserts that,

Social ties, personal connections, and community good will [sic] are often appropriately seasoned by self-interest and a clear view of prices. It is true that too much instrumentalism and marketness can sour the embedded market. But a dash of instrumentalism and marketness might well ensure a more substantial, nourishing meal.

Hinrichs critically assesses community goodwill as a rather romantic notion. She suggests that it might take more than that to survive in business. While recognising the psychological satisfaction to be had from transactions such as those identified by Lee (2000), Hinrichs affirms the need for business people to possess business competencies as well.

The double-sided nature of this equation, the need to look at both sides of the interaction between producer and consumer, is encapsulated in a proposal by Prigent-Simonin and Hérault-Fournier (2005). They go a little further in suggesting that such new forms of trade might represent a novel type of social contract between consumers looking for reassurance and producers looking for legitimacy. It is further proposed that the demand side of the producer-consumer equation, that is, consumers seeking reassurance might generate different conventions and evaluations of quality (Marsden, Banks & Bristow 2000).

Summary of Section 2.2.5: Primary producers looked to alternative food networks to improve their economic circumstances. Alternative food networks are mechanisms outside the conventional food systems and are often more consumer oriented. They can take advantage of economies of scope and synergy. That is, their proponents can capitalise on aspects of rurality typical of farming areas and work with others in their communities who are similarly like-minded to establish alternative and joint means of revenue generation. Alternative food networks thus include food and wine trails. They are also supply driven. On the other hand, their circumstances match changing consumer demand within the food and wine systems for greater information and more satisfying and trustful relationships between consumers and producers.

Material to follow: The nature of and demand for such relationships as can be provided by alternative food networks, and food and wine trail businesses, also seems to be predicated on altering views of quality within the food system. This is the subject of the next section.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	2.2 External environment
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two	2.2.1 Rural change
Chapter Four: Methodology	2.2.2 Increases in regulation
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References and Appendices	2.2.5 Importance of alternative food networks
	<u>2.2.6 New quality conventions</u>
	2.2.7 Impact of developments within tourism
	2.2.8 Changing role of government
	2.2.9 External environment; a summary of critical factors to date

2.2.6 New quality conventions

Quality, a much used and familiar word, is a problematic concept in food and wine. The difficulty is reflected in the lack of a generally agreed upon definition (Dimara & Skuras 1999). Attempts at definition only seem to extend and confuse the diversity of interpretations already in use. For instance, ‘... the quality of food can be described as a multi-dimensional piece of data’ (Prigent-Simonin & Hérault-Fournier 2005, p. 4). Then there are potential disagreements. Murdoch and Miele (2004b), on the one hand, claim that food quality has intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. Yet others say,

... quality is not intrinsic. Quality is defined “in relation with”. It is the act of qualification that reveals the quality of the products through the interactions between the product and the criteria by which it is judged. It depends on what these criteria are, how they are chosen, which people are in charge of judging, and how to certify quality and to sanction those who do not meet the established criteria (Muchnik, Biénabe & Cerdan 2005, p. 4).

While there may be no real consensus upon quality it is commonly accepted that quality relates to the satisfaction of consumer wants. Thus the idea projects a consistent idea of enhanced attributes whether it be a service or a product (Ilbery & Kneafsey 1998).

Another assumption is that quality yields higher prices. Ilbery and Kneafsey (1998, p. 331) note, while reinforcing the relative notion of quality,

Consumer perceptions of what constitutes quality vary for specific products and between individuals, regions and countries. However, irrespective of context, quality usually has connotations of being able to command higher prices in the market-place.

Quality is not simply a means by which profit margins can be increased although that is often how it is construed (Winninger 2000). It is also a means by which a product or service—or an individual, organisation, region or place—gets an advantage over its competitors. In this sense quality is a positional characteristic as well as a means of providing something different to the mundane. In trying to come to grips with the concept of food quality the Scottish Food Strategy Group (1993, p. 3) stated that,

... a quality food and drink product is one which is differentiated in a positive manner by reason of one or more of these features from the standard product, it is recognised as such by the consumer, and can therefore command a market benefit if it is effectively marketed.

In this context quality assumes a positive difference in some way.

Quality seems a complex notion. Ilbery and Kneafsey (1998) have categorised it in four dimensions: certification, association, specification and attraction. Certification implies compliance with regulations established by an authority of some sort. Association entails an association with a region, area or place of origin. Specification makes the nature of the production clear, that is, to a recipe or based upon the use of particular raw materials. Finally, attraction involves the item's physical appearance, taste, texture and the like.

This is a useful set of distinctions and sections of it will be elaborated upon later. Whatever way quality is defined, however, there has been an increased emphasis on it within the food and wine sector over the last generation or so. Morris and Young (2004) suggest a variety of explanations for this. First, the importance of quality in providing an advantage in highly competitive markets is acknowledged. Secondly, food scares have increased interest in matters of food traceability. It is also suggested that consumers are becoming more demanding in matters of animal health and welfare. A survey by Co-op, a British supermarket chain, recorded that consumers were more worried about animal welfare and fair trade than they were about climate change (Klanten et al. 2008, p. 12). Such consumers also worry about the safety implications of food and drink and hence the provenance issue more broadly. Lang and Heasman (2004, p. 47) note in reflecting on productivist agriculture, that '... while successfully raising the caloric value of the world food supply, it has failed to address the issue of quality and as a result, there is now a worldwide legacy of externalised health costs'. Finally, Morris and Young (2004, p. 84) reflect upon the behaviour of, '...

well-educated consumers who use the purchase of particular types of food to indicate possession of ‘cultural capital’, a restatement of the idea of food as personal identity introduced earlier.

Consistent with this last approach is another that suggests that contemporary consumers are rejecting more mundane foods in favour of variety and difference. Increasing consumer affluence is also seen to have led to a growth in demand for a greater range and variety of food than everyday production formats typically allow.

Thus, food of clear local provenance is often thought to be of a higher quality (i.e. safer) than ‘global’ food. Locally recognizable foodstuffs, which bear clear traces of the ‘clean’ and ‘green’ environments in which they have been produced, become desirable objects of consumption for they enshrine both product differentiation and proximity to nature (Murdoch & Miele 1999, p. 469).

These latter interpretations of quality, that is, that products or services possess characteristics (qualities) that make them different and therefore able to stand apart from other products or services, have taken on greater import of late (Goodman 2003; Parrot, Wilson & Murdoch 2002; Sage 2003a). Parrot et al. (2002, p. 243) interpret this shift as one from a productivist logic, whereby producers might add a ‘sugar coating’ in order to ‘gloss’ a product, to one where quality concerns are far more genuine because consumer behaviour is now taken more seriously. Such a substantive change is proposed because,

... many problems associated with the industrialization of food chains are steadily becoming apparent. In particular, concerns about food safety and nutrition are leading many consumers in advanced capitalist countries to exercise more caution in their consumption habits. A growing number of discerning consumers are demanding “quality” products (Murdoch, Marsden & Banks 2000, pp. 107-8).

Such understanding wedds resistance to agro-industrial foodstuffs to a growing reflexivity among consumers (Sage 2003a).

Further expansion of the concept of food quality is derived, in part, from French studies on the economic idea of conventions (Sage 2003a). Such thinking developed at a time when it was becoming difficult for economists to reconcile apparently contradictory business theories. These were notably the notions of efficiency, utility maximisation, competitiveness and calculated self-interest, contrasted with apparently antagonistic practices such as the loss-making of the small businesses researched by Lee (2000). Some businesses continued to trade while seemingly unviable. Something was missing in situations such as this and explanations were needed. Monetary exchange value did not seem enough. As it was in

economics so it was in the industrial relations area where it, ‘... was the recognition that not only labour but commodities in general suffered from the deficiencies of ‘incomplete contracts’, requiring therefore rules, norms and conventions for their production and exchange’ (Wilkinson 1997, p. 309). Hence the movement to further consider what such conventions could be.

Thompson attributed this turn of events in part to the existence of a moral economy. This was seen as an exchange, ‘... justified in relation to social or moral sanctions, as opposed to the operation of free market forces’ (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson & Stevenson 1996, p. 36). Conventions theory was offered as a more likely explanation. It is a term that includes the, ‘... more or less general rules or norms and behaviour that bind people together in mutual expectations and give coherence to their actions’ (Trabalzi 2007, p. 286). It was considered relevant to all forms of economic production because it threw light on how different qualities were manifested and combined and drew attention to the different forms of embeddedness that quality exhibited (Sage 2003a).

Thevenot (cited in Murdoch & Miele 1999, p. 471) outlined the following main conventions by which goods are evaluated and described by customers.

- i. Commercial or market conventions; mainly evaluation by price,
- ii. Domestic conventions; mainly centred on trust, information exchange and attachment to traditional production, place and/or region,
- iii. Industrial conventions; related to standards of efficiency, reliability and predictability,
- iv. Public conventions; the relevance of trademarks, branding and labels,
- v. Civic conventions; satisfaction of collective objectives or principles of a higher order.

Latour, another noted conventions theorist, suggested that it should also be possible to speak of an ecological convention (in Murdoch, Marsden & Banks 2000). He proposed this because such an idea seemed necessary in order to reshape economic forms and circumstances rather than just reproduce them. It would also be a means of, ‘... withdrawing from and/or creating alternatives to the dominant system rather than challenging it directly’ (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson & Stevenson 1996, p. 38).

Quality conventions as just described, however, have not always seemed to relate well to food. Some research has confirmed their direct validity and applicability (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002) but other work has stretched the ideas. In working with issues related to food qualities in Australia, for instance, Gralton and Vanclay (2005) suggest that quality is any

attribute that adds value to basic agricultural products. They then appear to rework conventions so as to have value-adds include technical, environmental, socio-cultural, production related and place-based conventions. These can be seen to overlap with those initially proposed by Thevenot (cited in Murdoch, Marsden & Banks 2000) and are further described as,

Technical; characteristics such as taste, texture, shape and smell, basically what characterises a food item. In other contexts this has been referred to as typicality, the basic, ‘...physical and taste criteria according to its type’ (Lescot 2006, p. 33).

Environmental; the characteristics that make food ecologically sustainable.

Place; invokes, ‘... the power associated with meanings people attach to those places’ (Gralton & Vanclay 2005, p. 3).

Socio-cultural; which include features such as local ownership and employment, traditional methods and local knowledge, and immediate and direct transactions between producers and consumers.

Production-related; includes the level and nature of human input, production-volume and the amount of local foodstuffs used.

Adding to the debate on the relevance of quality and conventions to food, Sage (2003b) suggests that good food needs to incorporate at least three fundamental attributes. They are, first, the embodied properties of the product—its taste, colour and other sensual attributes—which make it unique or distinctive. Secondly, its ecologically embedded character which is defined by where it comes from, its place of origin, the nature of its raw materials, and the means by which it was produced. Finally, Sage refers to the socially embedded features that are identified by its scale of production and through its usually limited distribution through short food supply chains.

Consistent with the diversity of opinion on both quality and food quality, there are other frameworks. Cazes-Valette (in Prigent-Simonin & Hérault-Fournier 2005, p. 4) proposes seven distinct facets of quality. They are,

- i. Nutritional—what is its contribution to a balanced diet?
- ii. Hygienic—is it good for your health?
- iii. Functional—is it practical, can it be handled and transported easily?
- iv. Organoleptic—relates to the sensory pleasure (or otherwise) of the food when procured or consumed.
- v. Social—the power of food to locate people in or against a reference group.
- vi. Symbolic—is the food within the range of foods usually consumed by the relevant cultural group?
- vii. Humanistic—is it produced ecologically, sustainably, does it yield a fair price to the producer, ie. fair trade.

Whichever dimension of quality is chosen, and they are numerous as has been indicated, it seems that the problems surrounding it can, in part, be resolved in personal interaction - between consumer and producer, an engagement that appears to be lost in the more commercial, impersonal format of the supermarket (Sage 2003a, 2003b).

One aspect of quality needs to be considered further, however, and that is quality assurance. Quality assurance involves the systems by which a product or service has to meet certain content and process criteria in order to be considered acceptable. This would be a quality certification in the scheme identified previously in this section. Quality assurance schemes for the food industry are about safety, about providing the consumer with surety (Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2006). They can cover all aspects of food preparation from growing, picking and processing to ultimate food handling in restaurants and other food outlets. In reporting on such matter for a food and wine trail it was noted that,

The level of accreditation amongst the members varies, including HACCP plans, QMS, SQF2000 and most trail members have Food Safety plans. All acknowledge the need for stringent attention to the production of quality products. Interestingly, a number of members commented that the group has an implicit policy of quality, almost to the level of a “peer” accreditation system. One member noted the “*the group is committed to excellence*” (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003, p. 3).

The actual qualities alluded to here are derived from the industrial and commercial conventions already outlined (see previous section). Such quality assurance programs can be government-initiated. They are often administered by industry associations, however, and are frequently part of a broader program of activities to ensure food safety. As Meat and Livestock Australia (2005, p. 1) suggest,

The food industry (farmers, transporters, packers, processors, manufacturers and retailers) is responsible for safeguarding the food supply through its adherence to government regulations; implementation of quality assurance programs; research and development; consultation with veterinarians, extension agents etc.; private testing; and education.

Such aspects of food quality seem preoccupied with food standardisation. This approach appears to have two main sources. First, there appears to be a drive to improve food quality through regularising criteria, by making sure all food undergoes similar processes. Secondly, there are concerns to stabilise commodities that can act as a globalising reference for comparison purposes (Murdoch & Miele 1999). These are not necessarily mutually obtainable aims as standardising international references for food may well be attempted at a detriment to food quality, howsoever defined.

In summary, food quality has undergone standardisation largely with the encouragement of the agro-food companies, in an attempt to make products comparable, consistent and acceptable. These are industrial conventions. On the other hand, modern consumers are turning away from standardisation in search of variety and differentiation, characteristics more aptly seen as domestic conventions. As Atkins and Bowler (2001, p. 31) suggest, there has been a, ‘... reorientation from ‘basic’ foods and export crops to a more important role for the supply of inputs for ‘elite consumption in the north’’. Such consumer reflexivity appears to be in part driven by health concerns brought about by bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), foot and mouth disease in livestock, and a form of ‘green’ consumerism. Increasing affluence in developed countries is also seen to have led to a growth in consumers who are demanding greater range and variety than standardised food production formats will generate.

Summary of Section 2.2.6: Quality is a changing and evasive attribute. While maintaining the impression of value for money, the concept has moved from that commercial dimension to one that includes environmental, regional and place matters, conditions that align it more closely with contemporary consumer demands and associate it with the type of information that can be gained on food and wine trails. Quality assurance programs, however, continue to be more associated with safety and reliability issues.

Material to follow: The next section takes up another demand factor within the external environment of food and wine trails. That is the changing nature of tourists and tourism. This includes, in particular, the advent of lifestyle and culinary tourism and its relevance to the changing landscape of identity-making. For food and wine trails to be successful as tourism activities, what they offer would need to coincide with current tourism demand.

Chapter One: Introduction	<p><u>2.2.7 Impact of developments within tourism</u> 2.2.7.1 Lifestyle tourism 2.2.7.2 The culinary tourist 2.3.7.3 Other types of tourism 2.2.8 Role of government 2.2.9 External environment— a summary of critical factors to date</p>
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	
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2.2.7 Impact of developments within tourism

The changes within broader society that have been indicated up until now have also had an impact upon consumer attitudes to food and wine. This is reflected within changes in tourism. The first item to be considered will be lifestyle tourism followed by information on the culinary tourist. The section will finish with information on other types of tourism, namely special interest tourism, short break and drive tourism.

2.2.7.1 Lifestyle tourism

The concept of lifestyle is contentious and there appears little agreement about definition (Sobel 1981). There does seem some accord, however, with the idea that lifestyle involves consumption in some way. Lifestyles are recognisable ways of living through the mundane and daily practices of consumption (Jagose 2003). Consumption is used as an active and self-conscious architect of lifestyle. This was not always the case as will be shown below.

Establishing a lifestyle has gained in importance. This has taken place as traditional sources of identity, often understood with reference to religious belief, have waned in relevance. In discussing identity up to the twentieth century, Dann (2002, p. 5) declared that,

Earlier distinctions based on class, race, age and gender started to fade, the institutional cultural demarcations of education, the family, religion, health, politics and so on no longer operated as they once so clearly did under an orderly set of rules, regulations, statuses and roles.

Identity under the conditions identified by Dann was typically assigned at birth. The thinking that supported such identity-making stayed that way largely until the twentieth century. It was a rigid, unyielding, hegemonic notion of people as isolated individuals who took on (or were assigned) their essential character almost before birth (Massey 2004).

For the most part the evolution of modernity in the West, essentially coexistent with the Enlightenment, eroded the fundamental faith pillars on which traditional belief systems were based. They were replaced with, among others, secular science, industrial capitalism, belief in progress and change, material betterment and innovation (Côté & Levine 2002; Dann 2002). Traditional patterns of belief and behaviour proved difficult to maintain. Along with this momentous transformation was an increased interchange of goods worldwide. This was accompanied by greater consumerism, heightened media involvement and enhanced personal mobility—the domination of networks and flows rather than the established patterns of custom and convention (Macnaghten & Urry 2000). This disembedding of tradition, the removal of pre-cast anchors, is deplored by some and actively resisted by others. Then there

are those who consider such global flows of goods, people and information as enormous opportunities for lifestyle choices (Ray 1999b). For as Giddens (1991, p. 91) says,

Lifestyle is not a term which has much applicability to traditional cultures, because it implies choice within a plurality of possible options, and is 'adopted' rather than 'handed down' All social choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be. The more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking.

In putting lifestyle-making into an overall context, however, it is appropriate to acknowledge the contribution of Niels Kayser Nielsen (1999). He is of the opinion that identity is more a product of space than time and consequently downplays the role of a time-bound self. Kayser Nielsen proposes space as the more critical determinant in that it can be navigated, moved through, improved and understood, particularly in leisure realms. Thus lifestyles and identity are produced by experiencing certain physical actions. People become something by doing—and this can strongly be related to leisure.

Leisure is a critical lifestyle element—and tourism is an active component of leisure. That tourism is part of consumption and identification is supported by Chaney (1996) who proposed that contemporary tourism is selling a consumer good. And not so much a material good as the use of places to generate extraordinary experience. Tourist activities have become consumer items and clearly a feature of lifestyle differentiation.

The importance of this lifestyle-consumption connection seems far-reaching. Indeed, it has led other theorists such as Ray (1999b, p. 258, emphasis in original) to suggest that, as a result, the very nature of production has changed and that,

Consumer/global capitalism has led production increasingly to replace material and labour value with 'design value'. The trajectory is towards production and consumption being based less on utility and more on the symbolism of the good or service; it is the production and consumption of *signs*.

Baudrillard (in Poster 1988) proposed that items can be determined by their denotative and connotative worth; for their utility and sign value respectively. Such material symbolism can have an ethical construction in the decision to only purchase foodstuffs produced through ecologically sound means, for instance, or to only buy coffee produced under fair trade conditions (Renard 2003). This is confirmed by Allen et al. (2003) who suggest that people who share food preferences often affirm a shared political agenda. They have a need to create food systems that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable and the like.

Food consumption is thus part of a moral choice whereby they choose what they eat based upon whether they think it is good or bad ethically (Holloway 2002).

Symbolism, however, is contingent. The identity and place associations of consumption appear quite mutable. What was popular last year may not have the same cachet tomorrow. This could be personally problematic for, as Bell (2002, p. 15 emphasises in original) notes,

... with so many products on the market, constructing a personal identity becomes fraught with unlimited choice. Out of the proliferating brands, *which one most accurately communicates who I am?*

Relating that to food and wine, Callero (2003) suggests that, rather than having any universal qualities, they exist as sort of a cultural tool kit parts of which are deployed in social settings to accomplish social objectives.

Giddens (1991) discusses the emergence of identity projects wherein personal meaning becomes very much a matter of private choice and effort. Ulrich Beck (Beck in Warde 2001, p. 558) suggests that as an inherited sense of class differentiation is now passé, people, '... must choose between different lifestyles, subcultures, social ties and identities'. One result of such change has been that identity is now more constructed through leisure than work, the point made previously by Kayser Nielsen (1999). Leisure in all its diversity provides a wide range of methods whereby identities can be put together. Among them are choices about food and drink and their derivatives, culinary tourism and the culinary tourist. It has been suggested that the organic movement, for instance, seeks, '... change through cultural as well as political innovation, reconstructing values, personal identities and cultural symbols, and contributing to the emergence of alternative lifestyles' (Tovey 2002, p. 3). No one purchase of a food or drink item, no one particular choice of how to spend one's time can construct a lifestyle, however, for as Jagose (2003, p. 112) argues,

Such a decision ... is only one small tessellation in the mosaic of consumption, one micro-choice among the numerous aesthetic judgements through which consumption congeals as personalized lifestyle.

While such theorising is important, it remains to be seen how food and wine tourism is impacted upon by lifestyle factors. Frochot (2003) noted the importance of iconic consumer items such as champagne and roquefort cheese to French culture, consumption and tourism. She also noted that French regional tourism brochures have not promoted lifestyle items as a means of attracting culinary tourists and wondered, therefore, at the strength and relevance of such lifestyle categorising.

Lifestyle research in Australia on food and wine tourism (Sparks et al. 2005), however, suggests that among the enhancement factors for such tourists are authenticity, value for money, personal interactions, a diverse product range, information dissemination, opportunities for personal growth and learning, and the chance to relax and be indulgent. All in all, this appears to be a trend towards a culture where food and wine reflect experience rather than sustenance and where such preferences help generate identity (Sparks et al. 2005).

2.2.7.2 The culinary tourist

An enthusiasm for culinary tourism in Australia possibly reflects, in part, the Australian Government's (2003b, p. 6) interest in, 'better informed, more discerning tourists', and the changing patterns and trends in consumer demand that have been generated. It can also be seen as a response to changing tourist expectations (Wolf 2002). But what is known of the 'better informed, more discerning' tourist when it comes to food and wine consumption? Not surprisingly, given broad governmental interest in such matters and the success of the local wine industry attested to previously (see section 2.2.3), Australia has produced a number of studies and papers on this issue. Most have been on the wine tourist, however, not the culinary tourist (for example see, Beames 2003; Carlsen 2004; Carlsen & Dowling 1999; Charters, Steve & Ali-Knight 2002; Macionis & Cambourne 1998; O'Mahony et al. 2006)—and this dichotomy will be taken up again later.

Understanding the culinary tourist would seem vital to the success of any business that makes a living from the sale of food and drink (Carmichael 2005; Nicholson & Pearce 2001). From take-away outlets to *haute cuisine* restaurants, from pick-your-own fruit patches to highly reputed vineyards, knowing what motivates the visitor, understanding something about who they are, why they are visiting and what they prefer, appears critical to commercial success (King 2002).

Analysis of wine tourism was initially inspired by demographics (Carlsen 2004); a desire to know more about the age, gender, occupation, income level and place of residence of winery visitors and wine drinkers. Some of this data is explored below. The research approach ultimately leaned towards psychographics (Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu & Haydam 2004), however, an approach that categorised populations on the basis of their values and lifestyles.

Customers who react in a homogeneous way, be it in their motivations, behaviours, reactions to marketing activities or the benefits they seek from consuming products and services can be grouped ... enabling products to be

developed that can more effectively satisfy the different needs of each segment (McKercher & du Cros 2003, p. 45).

A paper by Mitchell, Hall and McIntosh (2000) identified 23 articles prepared prior to the year 2000 on research into the habits and behaviour of wine tourists. Half of them are recognisable as relating to Australia. Such research gave demographic confirmation that the wine tourist, '... is usually 30-50 years of age, in the moderate to high income bracket and comes from within or in close proximity to the wine region itself' (2000, p. 121). This information equates with a study done in Italy (Gatti & Maroni 2004) which reported that visitors to Italian vineyards were most often male, most certainly between the ages of 26-55 and either white collar or managerial in occupation. While it is useful to have such a descriptor confirmed, other research from New Zealand gives pause for thought suggesting as it does that wine tourists can differ among regions (Hall, C.M. et al. 2002).

On the basis of this review it is easy to understand why the classification of wine tourists is problematic. Attempts have been made to categorise them in a number of ways:

- i. Self-classification,
- ii. The location of consumption,
- iii. Cellar door workers' analyses,
- iv. Comparisons with national drinking patterns, and
- v. Particular aspects of demography and psychography.

On the grounds that classification of wine tourists might be better achieved through considering the tourists' own interests in wine, Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) undertook research, principally in Western Australia, and came up with the following four-part categorisation; Wine lover, the Connoisseur, Wine interested and Wine novice.

While Charters and Ali-Knight appear confident about the characteristics of the first three aforementioned categories, they seem somewhat nonplussed about the last, the Wine novice. They suggest it has similarities to a previous category referred to as the 'curious tourist' (2002, p. 316) which might be more apt because the Wine novice appears to be not all that interested in fine dissections about wine. As Charters and Ali-Knight express it, Wine novices, '... find the idea of a vineyard tour to be more appealing ... merely standing at a cellar door, tasting has less appeal for them ... Beyond that, and their desire to eat at a winery, it is hard to find any common motivational or educational ground which distinguishes them' (2002, p. 316). Apparently such a visitor has an interest in wineries as part of an overall interest, perhaps a desire to see, learn and explore but maybe with an enthusiasm for food. For they are not wine aficionados. It is possible that they might be at

wineries as a non-committed companion to someone who is interested in wine. They might also just be tourists, simple experience seekers. The lack of confidence in this category, as opposed to the more assured commentary on the others, suggests that there may be something more to this. It may relate to other distinctions more germane to culinary tourists than wine tourists as a whole. This is also found in the segments described by Cambourne and Macionis (2002) who suggest that Visible achievers and the Socially aware so identified offer a broader categorisation than those typically applied to wine tourism.

Ignatov's (2003) culinary tourism research in Canada contributes to this. Ignatov began her work proposing that those who undertook wine tourism may not be the same as those who attend farmers' markets, seek out unusual food practices and experiences, visit food fairs and the like. Ignatov's purpose was, in part, to distinguish culinary tourists from other tourists and, within the former rubric, understand differences among food enthusiasts, wine enthusiasts and those who are interested in both. Additionally, she was interested in identifying segments with respect to cross participation in each of the culinary activities. Initially her research proposed three potential groups; food travellers, wine travellers and culinary tourists, the latter encompassing the interests of both the first two groups.

Ignatov's research was undertaken using data from the Canadian Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS) dataset, an extensive national tourism database. It involved telephone interviews and a mail-out questionnaire response of 5740. From this she determined that nearly 45 percent of the Canadian tourism market is represented by culinary tourists. Interestingly, from the standpoint of the previous recognition that Australian wine tourists were principally male, she identified Canadian culinary tourists as mainly, '... females in their mid-forties, highly educated with above average incomes; they are highly diverse in their travel motivations, interests, and activities pursuits (both at home and while travelling' (Ignatov 2003, p. iv).

Moreover, two particular segments emerged. First, there was a food/rural group, enthusiastic about rural areas and food provenance and very interested in local and traditional cooking styles. Secondly, there was a food and wine/true cuisine group quite diverse in their travel motivations and activities, and who were involved in all aspects of culinary tourism. They also exhibited high cultural orientation and taste (2003). Of the Australian segmentation referred to previously these groups would appear to most closely align with the Socially aware, that is, tertiary educated, avid arts goers with no real financial worries; '...

experiential tourists who pursue a stimulating lifestyle, both in their homes and leisure activities, very green and progressive' (Cambourne & Macionis 2002, p. 91).

A key feature of the findings, however, was that wine tourists were mainly interested in wine itself and not nearly as eclectic in approach or as interested in food more broadly as the other two groups. This suggests that food and not wine may be what motivates culinary tourists and that wine is only a supplement (Ignatov 2003).

Hjalager (2004), a prominent Danish food and tourism theorist, makes a very pertinent contribution to this topic by suggesting that tourists can be categorised into four different sets on the bases of their attitudes towards food and beverage. They are: existential, experimental, recreational and diversionary. According to Hjalager, the existential tourist seeks out food and experiences that offer a chance for learning as well as appreciation. Such a tourist wants to know more about the food, foodways and practices; they want to know more about the region and its culture. On the other hand, the experimental gastronomy tourist is more involved in what the food and its practices might say about them. They symbolise their lifestyles in part through food and beverage consumption usually through keeping up with 'in' restaurants, contemporary foodstuffs and food fads. The issue for them is usually quality, visibility and fashion. The recreation gastronomy tourist, however, is less adventurous or interested and is more likely to seek out or produce food they know and like; they might even bring it on a vacation with them. The diversionary gastronomic tourist seeks to escape from the mundane; they want food to be served to them without too much effort or pomp. The latter like large serves in restaurants, or places within which they and their friends can be hospitable and sociable (Hjalager 2004).

It seems reasonable to assume that the culinary tourist referred to previously largely overlaps with Hjalager's conception of the existential tourist, someone who is more broadly interested in food and wine beyond just the tasting regime. Moreover, the lifestyle tourist would seem to accord with Hjalager's theorising about the experimental tourist, one who uses food and wine in part to define themselves and others. Yet there is no clarity on whether wine tourists are the same as culinary tourists and if they are, what are the characteristics of the food tourist or the culinary tourist. Ignatov's work is suggestive but not conclusive. Hjalager's projections are very interesting but they remain largely theoretical and will not be tested within this research. Further, there still remains work to be done on the overall role of food and wine within tourism per se. This is particularly relevant for food and wine trails which,

using the foregoing discussion, could nominally attract wine tourists, food tourists, culinary tourists and general tourists.

Hjalager's (2004) comments about learning and the symbolic capacity of food appear to be based in part on the idea of distinction. This concept, inspired by Bourdieu (1984), holds that people develop attitudes, perceptions and knowledge that they feel set them apart from others. This is taken further by Ravenscroft and van Westering (2001), albeit discussing wine but with equal applicability to food, who suggest that knowledge about serious leisure activities provides an entry to a discrete and inclusive 'social world' (p. 151), one occupied by people with similar leisure interests. It is not difficult to relate this work to the ideas of Hjalager (2004), and Ignatov and Smith (2006). It also appears congruent with the theories of Maffesoli (1996) who proposed the existence of affective tribes to contemporary society. Such tribes are loose groups of people who determine their identity in part by shared interests (1996)—in this case, food and/or wine. In modern parlance such people are often referred to as foodies.

While there might be some uncertainty about the culinary tourist there seems little doubt of the worth of such consumers, however identified, to regional-rural areas. The increase in tourist participation in any region has been reckoned to achieve one or more of the following broad goals,

- Creation and maintenance of local incomes, employment and growth,
- Contributions to the costs of providing economic and social infrastructure (eg. roads, water, sewage and communication),
- Encouragement to the development of other industrial sectors (eg. through local purchasing links),
- Additions to local amenities (eg. sports and recreation facilities, outdoor recreation opportunities, and arts and culture) and services (eg. shops, post offices, schools and public transport), and,
- Contributions to the conservation of environmental and cultural resources, especially as scenic (aesthetic) urban and rural surrounds are primary tourist attractions (Hall, CM & Mitchell 2000b).

It is only the first of these that will be pursued through this thesis, however.

2.2.7.3 Other types of tourism

The literature suggests that there could be three other types of tourism relevant to food and wine trails. The three types will be treated together in this section although special consideration will be given to drive tourism, which can be seen to encompass the others. They are, first, special interest tourism; second, short breaks and, finally, drive tourism.

Certainly a visit to a food and wine trail would appear to match criteria for all three. Special interest tourism, for instance, may be seen as the provision of customised leisure and recreational experiences driven by the expressed needs of individuals and groups (Douglas, Douglas & Derrett 2001). This would seem relevant to food and wine trails which appear to be established in order to meet the needs of those with gastronomic interests (Brunori & Rossi 2000). Short-break tourism essentially comprises stays of one to three nights' duration (Edgar 2000) and, certainly, visiting a food and wine trail area could align with that although it is not essential.

An agreed-upon definition of drive tourism, however, is difficult to find. Nevertheless, whatever the definition, and variations among them will be outlined later, it involves the use of a motor vehicle. Indeed use of a vehicle is fundamental to most food and wine trails as it seems few could be undertaken without one. An unpagged trail promotional brochure in McLaren Vale, S.A., for example, proposes that it is a, '... "do it yourself" Wine and Cheese tour ... a scenic *drive* through the region's varied landscape' (Blessed Cheese 2005).

This is not unusual. The most common type of transport used by overnight visitors during 2002, for example, was a private vehicle, with 77 per cent of all overnight travellers using a private vehicle at some time on their trip (Riley & Marshall 2003). The car is both ubiquitous and essential in a country as large as Australia. Cars extend where people can go and what they can do. Whole areas of social life would be impossible or difficult without the private car (Urry 2000). Further statistics suggest that over half of international visitors to regional Australia arrive at their destinations in self-drive vehicles. Another 30 per cent use other forms of road transport (Carson, Scott & Waller 2002). The motor vehicle has facilitated tourism to an enormous degree. It encourages a knowing of nations and areas for, as Urry (2000, pp. 60-1) points out, motoring actually instigated the, 'slow meandering motor tour ... a voyage through life and history of the land'. And, as Jackson (in Zube 1970, p. 60) says,

Never was the lure of the open road so powerful, so irresistible as now; for merely to be on a highway, entirely without a destination in view, is to many of every class and age a source of unending pleasure.

The road appears to have a fascination for people, a more than considerable allure that will be considered later. Howsoever it is understood, the motorised passenger vehicle, big or small, would appear critical to tourism in Australia—and essential for most food and wine trails. In an article on the Capital Country food and wine trail, for instance, the author maintains that exploration of the villages referred to requires a car (Selby 2005). Severe

increases in fuel prices in the first decade of the twenty first century may place a question mark over the future of this phenomenon. Certainly economic downturns, even climatic variations, have impacted upon drive tourism in the past (Olsen 2002). There is no reason to believe that future fuel price increases would be any less problematic.

Food and wine trails are essentially regional phenomena and, even more essentially, elemental stop-and-go tourism. The advantages ceded to self-drive tourism, that is, greater control over speed and itinerary, relative comfort and low cost (Carson, Scott & Waller 2002) would appear to correlate closely to the requirements of food and wine trail travel as well. For as Prideaux and Carson (2003, p. 309) note about drive tourism,

A major aspect ... is its individuality and lack of rigidity compared to a packaged tour ... a traveller on a drive tour is not necessarily confined by location, selection or activity of timetables. It is the freedom of drive tourists to make and change their itinerary that is a distinguishing factor of drive tourism.

All the characteristics identified by Prideaux and Carson (2003) would appear matched by the presentation of food and wine trails for visitors in private vehicles. For what food and wine trails usually offer includes freedom from time constraints (other than opening and closing hours), and they demand relatively little of the tourist in terms of schedules. ‘Treat yourself to a relaxed country drive taking in the beauty of the region ...’ is the way the Noosa Food Trail brochure (Tourism Noosa 2005) promotes itself. There may well be specific activities that demand adherence to a time regimen—a specific tour of a food facility, a special tasting session perhaps (McBoyle 1994; McBoyle & McBoyle 2008). These have been referred to elsewhere as coupling constraints (Zillinger 2007). In general, however, people seem free to choose if they go on a trail, where and when they go and how long they stay. Such decisions will appear idiosyncratic as some visitors might prefer to stay in one place during major parts of their holiday and go on day trips. Others might choose to travel from place to place along a fixed route (Zillinger 2007). It is not necessary to visit trail venues in a fixed format however. Visitors can exit when and as they please (Sharples 2003).

2.2.7.3.1 Drive tourism definition

Drive tourism has definitional difficulties. In contemplating its variety of meanings, Hardy (2003) classified them in three ways,

- Distance travelled (for example, Scott 2002)
- Origin-destination link and associated activities (Prideaux, Wei & Ruys 2001)
- Time spent away from home (Olsen 2002).

Olsen proposed that drive tourism should involve one night away from home. This would not seem to mesh with the definition of food and wine tourism that follows.

... food tourism [including wine] may be defined as visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel (Hall, CM & Mitchell 2001, p. 308).

There is no reference to time spent; rather the focus is on traveller intent, and destination. The businesses on food and wine trails in the Yarra Valley, Swan Valley and the Barossa—tourist areas within short driving distances of Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide respectively—would generally consider their day visitors as tourists. After all, they may not be regular customers and are drawn to the area mainly for its tourist interest. To the extent that such visitation is predicated on the car, they would have to be considered drive tourists as well. Certainly they comply with other qualities of drive tourism outlined later.

Characteristics	Factors
Location description	Urban areas, rural areas, themed route, site attractions
Visitor characteristics	Number, length of stay, spending, market segments, age, income
Access, including distance aspects	Close to city, affected by peripheral locations, modal characteristics, travel time
Nature of visitor flows	Specific routes selected by visitors for accessing destinations, and for travelling between destinations
Expenditure patterns	Products and services accessed by self-drive visitors
Attractions	Ownership, types, opening hours, natural/built, heritage/cultural
Accommodation	Caravan parks, motels, hotels, spas, camping, bed and breakfasts
Promotion	Forms such as themed routes, public vs private sector sponsorship, mass media
History	When drive tourists first attracted, history of the site visited by tourists
Investment	Private sector/public sector
Physical infrastructure	Roads, communications, shopping, vehicle repair, accommodation
Cooperation between stakeholders	Between stakeholders in a specific region, between regions, between public and private sectors, including product and destination linkages
Level of public sector involvement	Which level of the public sector (local, state, national), type of involvement, including regulations, investment and subsidies
Economic impacts and innovation	Job generation, new business, clustering, networks

Figure 2.1: A comparative drive tourism framework (after Prideaux and Carson, 2003)

There appears to be a weakness in defining tourism by transport method as it leads to categories such as train or plane tourism. The focus is thus drawn away from journey intention towards journey method. Hardy (2003) overcomes this by suggesting that drive tourism is really made up of a number of product markets. Each of these has its own boundaries and moves with the interactions of tourists and agents. Prideaux and Carson (2003) developed a framework (Fig. 2.1 above) to clarify the drive tourism experience.

It assists in the analysis of food and wine trails from the standpoint of drive tourism. Not all the elements listed above seem pertinent; those that have more bearing on vehicle tourism will be expanded upon from a food and wine trail standpoint. Using this framework it is possible to assert that food and wine trails are a themed route, principally in rural areas, and that little is known at this time about visitor characteristics or patterns of behaviour including expenditure although certain assumptions can be drawn from what has gone before (see, for example, Hjalager 2004; Ignatov & Smith 2006; Sparks et al. 2005). The source of trail consumers is uncertain; they could be day trippers, people on extended trips or they could be using a trail as part of a short weekend break. Hence their accommodation choices are uncertain as well. Promotion does appear important, as do aspects of stakeholder cooperation and involvement with other tourist operators.

Trail consumers, tourists, have been taken up elsewhere in this thesis as have other issues identified in the framework. It is now proposed to consider an aspect of the framework that relates specifically to motor vehicle or drive tourism, namely, specifically access and distance. Promotion and physical infrastructure which are also important will be considered in Chapter Three.

2.2.7.3.2 Access and distance

As indicated previously, food and wine trails generally require a motor vehicle. Some trails are bicycle friendly, others can be attempted by foot, but they are few in number (Lasdun & Davis 1997; Loverseed 2003). Most trails are set up for a car or bus. They feature parking spaces, turning areas, road signage and trail maps based upon road networks. These are the common accoutrements of contemporary twenty first century vehicle tourism. Such factors are considered important (Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004). Food and wine trails appear designed essentially to encourage short vehicle trips between sites in a limited area; the intention being to maximise business contact with as many tourists as possible.

What does not seem well enough known is the distance that vehicle-bound visitors will travel to visit such trails. Jackson observed, perhaps wryly, that 150 miles (approximately 240 kilometres) is the optimum driving distance between meals in the USA (Jackson in Zube 1970). But what distances will visitors undertake on a trail day trip and would there be differences should trails be visited as part of a longer vacation period? How far will people travel from generating areas to visit a trail or trails? Meyer (2004) suggests there are actually four components of this distance conundrum and they are not all related to kilometres travelled. The components are geographical distance, travel time, amount of money and cognitive distance.

The first of these components, geographical distance, comprises the actual distance between the generating region and the trail itself, the journey to the tourist site (Clawson & Knetsch 1971). Meyer (2004) proposes that there may well be differences for different aspects of trail attractions, that is, people may well travel further for something that really engages them. This could have implications for trail design. Travel time, refers to the actual day or days necessary to make such a trip. Will it be a day trip, an afternoon trip or an extended break? The third point, amount of money or cost, seems highly valid at a time when travel expenditure for cars is rising due to inflating fuel prices. Does the attraction provide value for money? Finally, cognitive distance is the perceived distance between the generating region, home or base, and the attraction area itself. How different or similar are they—and is it worth it?

Scott (2002) considered the distance travelled by tourists away from home to be a defining characteristic of drive tourism. The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses a distance of 40 kilometres as a standard for overnight travel (ABS 2008). While this might help in the definition of drive tourism it is not particularly effective in determining just how far people might be prepared to travel in a day, or over a more extended period.

Research from South Africa suggests that 180-200 kilometres one way is acceptable (Bruwer 2003). This is similar to Jackson's 150 mile limit between meals (in Zube 1970). Whether this is valid in Australia is not known. However, it does appear to parallel themed route research from Queensland, Australia, that indicated that people taking short breaks usually travel within a radius of 400 kilometres from their home (Olsen 2003). According to this research, the drive market can be divided on a time-travelled basis into short break (1-3 nights); short tour (4-7 nights); big tour (8-21 nights) and grand tour (22 plus nights).

Olsen's (2003) article does not give any details as to kilometres travelled, however. Such a figure would be useful for food and wine trail operators, as it would enable them to incorporate appropriate distances into trails. If the distances become too challenging it might be better to work with other tourist agents and accommodation providers in order to deliver tourists to venues in other ways. This could mean exploring options for a two-three day trail, which could mean added attractions and accommodation, or it could mean trying another marketing approach completely, a festival perhaps? Assessment of the importance of kilometres travelled for such tourists is vital to the development of appropriate products.

The disadvantages of self-drive tourism for food and wine trails appear to be few but significant nonetheless. Carson et al. (2002) submit that self-drive tourism is inefficient in terms of visitor numbers and that there are environmental sustainability issues for gas and diesel vehicles which contribute to pollution and greenhouse problems. Moreover, they add to amenity congestion, traffic obstructions and the ever-present danger of road trauma.

For food and wine trail operators, drive tourists are essential. They bring in money (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003). Yet, on the other hand, research indicates that drive tourists can be involved in such activity because it is relatively inexpensive compared to other forms of tourism (Olsen 2002). So a food and wine trail tourist may well be there because the experience is inexpensive not because they intend to outlay any cash. Still, there are also positives about drive tourists who have been seen to desire motor travel because of the independence and sense of freedom it brings (Trimble in Olsen 2002). Such tourists seek 'real experiences' and 'local information'; they view themselves as travellers and shun things considered 'touristy' (2002, p. 13). This is synonymous with attitudes to twenty first century tourism previously described which recognises a need to move away from mass tourism to more idiosyncratic patterns with greater flexibility and more meaningful experience (Meyer 2004). To the extent that food and wine trail offerings fall into this category, drive tourists would appear well matched with food and wine trails.

Summary of Section 2.2.7: There have been significant changes within society that have impacted upon the demand side of food and wine tourism; notably, the idea of lifestyle and culinary tourism, the latter perhaps a subset of the former. Social changes have meant that people now identify themselves as much by their consumption choices as anything else. Lifestyle and culinary tourism are thus ways by which people can indulge in tourism

activities that both develop and reflect who they are, to themselves and others. Participation in food and wine trails can be one of those activities.

Most food and wine trails are accessed by motor vehicle. They are thus a part of Drive Tourism. Components of drive tourism include distance travelled, the nature of such tourism, visitor characteristics and the like. The importance of such tourism lies in its relevance to the activities of food and wine trail tourists who are mainly vehicle-bound.

Material to follow: the following section considers the changes within governance in Australia and looks at how those changes have the potential to impact upon food and wine trails. This includes all levels of government from local to state and commonwealth although the suggestion is that the first two are taking on increasing prominence.

2.2.8 Changing role of government

All levels of government are implicated in the changes that have impacted upon rural and semi-rural communities. There have been significant changes to the nature and function of government as well. The literature about this area and its relevance to food and wine trails will now be addressed more specifically.

In discussing contemporary government in Australia, Gerritson (2000) suggests that the state is managed as follows,

Public management is now conceptualised as a public-private interaction, involving the operation of bureaucracies plus their connections with a variety of other institutions through the process of governance ... the whole system operating to dominant private sector values In reality this has meant constantly inventing means for delivering programs with static if not declining financial resources (pp. 136-7).

This seems to reflect the neo-liberal approach referred to previously (Gray & Lawrence 2000) as well as an associated difficulty in obtaining funding. As Gerritson (2000) indicates, such change is seen as a shift from local government to local governance with an implication that it involves greater engagement with private enterprise and civil society (Rainnie & Grant 2005). It also seems to fit with what has been referred to as the third way, an attempt to structure networks at local, national and international levels in order to give more voice to states and regions (Giddens 1998).

Governments across Australia have accepted that there is a need to facilitate economic development through local initiatives (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005). Local government has become more relevant to economic matters because economic

matters are becoming more local, the point made by Ray (2000; 2003) and others (Beer 2000; Beer & Maude 1996; Lagendijk, Arnoud 2001). A principal reason for this seems to be that in the knowledge economy, smaller more networked and interacting spaces are seen as advantageous sites for locating socio-economic activity. There are other explanations for the changes to the level and style of government involvement, however. Marsden suggests (Marsden 1999) that the changes accompanying globalisation, outlined previously, have produced a search for new forms of governance. Such forms do not rely on ponderous state interventions and rule by the public sector. Rather they look to more cooperative local participation with partnerships between levels and interests, and greater reliance on private and public entrepreneurship and innovation. This is in part a response to the changing nature of rural and regional life, which appears more complicated and diverse region to region (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Rainnie & Grant 2005). For each area reacts to globalisation in a different way according to its own particular set of historic, geographic, cultural, social, economic and regulatory circumstances. Each region thus requires individualised responses to deal with their particular problems.

The changes to global and local economies are such that rural areas are becoming less homogeneous rather than more, more differentiated rather than less. Previous government responses that relied upon broad sectoral policies such as agriculture, education, planning or housing to meet the needs of an essentially monochromatic state find these programs increasingly irrelevant to the needs of particular and different regions. Marsden (1999, p. 507) can thus propose that this, ‘...represents a social process which is increasingly jettisoning the social and state paternalistic structures which have typified rural areas throughout most of the twentieth century’. These are being replaced with more flexible, responsive and local programs.

Governments have not abandoned their role in dealing with economic matters and their aftermath, however. It is just that the source and approach to such responsibilities have changed. Planning and economic development in Australia have long been the prerogatives of states. Both matters have been used as political footballs, kicked around among the responsible authorities apparently (Rainnie & Grant 2005; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005). Local government has become more involved in economic matters at the same time as direct state intervention is weakening. Local government involvement in economic matters was legitimised and legislated for the State of Victoria in the 1990s, for instance. The challenges

then faced by local government were compounded by rising anxieties and expectations. At the same time, many of the key policy levers became harder to access in a world made more distant and unreliable by globalising economic relations and institutions (Wiseman 2005).

The capacity of local government varies from state to state, however, and approaches to issues such as regional and local development are inconsistent. No one pattern of local and regional development policy exists. Instead, there is considerable variation among the various states and territories as well as substantial disparity within each area (Beer 2000). Local government is dependent upon state legislation and regulation for its powers. Its responsibilities are onerous but often poorly resourced (Worthington & Dollery 2000). Nevertheless, local governments have supported economic development units and have been relevant to the formation and maintenance of some food and wine trails (ABC 2006; Faithorn 2003; Nexus & Urban 2003). The role of government might be changing but it still appears important to local economic initiatives and hence food and wine trails.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) summed up the situation presented here. This presages material on industry and knowledge that will be taken up further later in this review of literature. While local areas are more important economically, assistance to them is being withdrawn. It is, therefore,

An irony of globalisation ... that it enhances the significance of local and regional economies. This is due to, amongst other factors, the growing importance of industry clusters and networks, greater regional specialisation, the utilisation of “tacit” local knowledge and the need for regions to promote flexibility and adaptation when confronted with uncertainty (ALGA 2001, p.2).

2.2.9 External environment—a summary of critical factors to date

The purpose of this literature review is to assess the literature of food, wine, tourism and other disciplines in order to find factors potentially vital to the development and performance of food and wine trails. The initial framework established a tripartite division:

1. External factors,
11. Local conditions,
111. Internal subsystems; the management, personnel and technology of trails.

So far this review has canvassed literature on external factors that could influence food and wine trail development. From the supply side, from the point of view of the primary producer, these factors include the impacts of globalisation which have meant declining support to agriculture, increased competition and regulation.

Thus for the individual wine and food producer the future is not as stable as it once was and many have had to seek other options to sustain incomes. This has emphasised the relevance of alternative food networks (as distinct from conventional food supply chains) and highlighted the importance of economies of scope and synergy as means to supplement revenue. The literature in the latter areas introduced the importance of changing economic conventions and emphasised the potential significance of an economy of regard. The changing nature of economic relationship suggested in this literature stresses the possibility of greater information exchange between producer and consumer.

From the consumer or visitors' viewpoint, that is, the demand side, the potential factors developed so far include the increasing importance of cultural tourism. This suggests that visitors are interested in enhancing their understanding of the people and regions in which they travel. Part of these interests includes food and wine as a tourist motivator thus reflecting the growing significance of culinary tourism. These factors are augmented by literature that develops the relevance of lifestyle matters, including food and wine, as means of social identification. People visit food and wine areas as a means of establishing who they are. But it is not just social and cultural identification; visits to food and wine areas seem to be taken up as much because they enable contact between producer and consumer, a relationship that seems lost with increasing industrialisation and which is brought into greater focus given the number of crises that have beset the food industry over recent decades. People want to know more about the food they are consuming.

Much of this travel is done by private vehicle and drive tourism is seen to be an important aspect identified within the literature as well. Moreover, the literature exposes a range of ideas concerning the wine tourist but has little reference to the food tourist as such, a dichotomy that might need to be looked at further.

The intent of this thesis is to identify the factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails. The first part of this chapter has looked at social, cultural and economic changes of a broad nature, changes that might well have encouraged the development of food and wine trails. Trails, however, are not the same in every context. They do differ and thus seem to respond to differences at the local level. This next section looks at the factors which might be formative in the particular expression of food and wine trails in different areas.

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2.3 Local context

The first part of this section will look at the issue of regions and regionalism. The main thread that binds regions to this research on food and wine trails is that regions are increasingly using the relationships between food, wine and tourism to strengthen their economic and social vitality (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2001). Food and wine (and thus food and wine trails) are increasingly seen as a means to economic success through tourism. This section explores the literature on regions and the economy; that is, why are regions important, why are food and wine important as constituents of regional economies and how do food and wine trails make use of these factors and what local elements are employed to help?

Food and wine trails are relatively recent in genesis. Such development appears synchronous with the increasing relevance of regions and regionalism in economic debate. While most of the literature relates to economic matters, some of it is concerned with identity (for instance, Deacon 2004; Robbins 2001). This is ostensibly about how people and regions establish their validity and difference in a globalising world. The relevance of food to personal identity has been established earlier (see section 2.2.7). Food's regional identity will be considered further in this chapter. The three principal issues are the economic salience of regions, the importance of food and wine to regions and the relevance of food to identity. They all appear significant in the evolution of food and wine trails.

Factors potentially influencing local conditions are, then, the pertinence of regions and regional development matters (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005);

regional identity including the identity of food (Legendijk, Arnould 2004; Trabalzi 2004); the cultural economy, the means through which food and wine attain local status (Ray 2001); neo-endogenous development, the methods by which local development occurs, and the relevance of human, social and cultural capital (Ray 2003; Throsby 1999). One of these factors, the importance of the cultural economy, could have been considered in the previous section. It is included here because of its connectedness to regional development matters.

2.3.1 Introduction to regions and regionalism in Australia

Regions and regionalism have become the subject of broad academic and governmental attention in recent years (Beer 2000; Beer et al. 2005; Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Committee 2001; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005). Regionalism is a distinct spatial and temporal practice, one which has generated a significant amount of literature and contention (for example, Burnett & Danson 2003; Kneafsey & Ilbery 2001; Ock 2004; Ohlsson 2000; Paasi 2003; Raagmaa 2002). While much of this material is European, attention has been drawn to the importance of regions in other parts of the world including Australia (see Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Rainnie & Grobbelaar 2005).

The focus of this first section is mainly on the relationship between regions and economic development. The contemporary relevance of regions, as will be pointed out, is their growing importance as generators of growth. To do this it is important to understand the relevance of the cultural economy (Ray 1998, 2001) and its relationship to identity and food. Economic matters do appear as a dominant motif in this growing literature on regions. For instance, ALGA advises that,

A defining feature of globalization is the re-emergence of the local and regional economy as an important unit of innovation. The proposition is that regional stakeholders—industry, community and their local government constituents—will be central to the development and implementation of regional specific knowledge-based strategies if Australia is to successfully make the transition to a knowledge-based economy (ALGA 2001, p. 2).

Small though they may be food and wine trails can be seen as a manifestation of a specific community-oriented knowledge-based strategy.

2.3.2 Recent changes within regions in Australia

Regions have undergone serious change. The neo-liberal reforms referred to earlier (see section 2.2.1) have had far-reaching implications for regional areas within Australia (Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003). An illustration of this is contained in the report of the Sustainable

Gippsland Advisory Committee (SGAC. 2005, p. 3). It suggested that Gippsland, an eastern region in the state of Victoria, had, ‘...slipped from being one of the best to one of the worst performed regions in Australia’. The region’s problems were brought about largely by privatisation of the previously state-owned, coal-fired power system, centred in Gippsland. This was further exacerbated by the issue of climate change which has brought pressure on coal production because of its heavy generation of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. All this has meant severe reductions in employment and negative spin-offs for the rest of the area. It also presents a growing challenge to regional economic authorities.

No doubt some regions under-perform. This is understandable given changes to local and international economic systems. It does not explain, however, why regions around the world have taken on more importance. In pursuit of an answer to this, Lagendijk (2001) suggests that there is not one explanation, but several. He believed the answer to be bound up in complex and interrelated concepts such as industrial districts, clusters, regional innovation systems, learning regions, new industrial spaces and *milieux innovateurs*.

Ultimately, however, Lagendijk (2001) opts for one key factor, *viz.*, knowledge and the economic clout of knowledge, that have particular power and relevance within specific spaces and places. Knowledge is in some senses place-bound. Companies, organisations and institutions—private, public, educational and industrial—working closely with each other provide stimulus and synergy that separate and scattered organisations simply cannot generate. (For further reference to economic synergy see section 2.2.5.1.) Knowledge appears bound to (but not confined by) a region or area. The value of proximity in generating knowledge reinforces the importance of regions as a source of innovation and development. Companies and people use their geographical proximity and interrelatedness to further knowledge acquisition and promote their own interests (Morgan 1997).

Much of this theorising relates to industrial development and agglomeration advantages such as more efficient and cheaper transport and improved capital availability (Porter 1990). But this should not obscure the fact that it also has applicability in other spheres of economic and cultural endeavour—and to trails. Trails are the obvious product of people in local territories, people who have knowledge of each other and the area, working together to present a mutual product. Other work by Ray (1999a; 1999b; 2000; 2003) explores the different idea of territory, an area smaller than a region, and heightens its relevance to the idea of a trail. For

trails, as has been shown, are locally inspired small business enterprises, and generally territorial rather than regional.

To these changes to the importance of regions can be added the changes to governance already discussed (see section 2.2.8), actions which have driven more and more responsibility back to regions and the people and organisations within them. Moreover, the relevance of the culture economy which Ray (1998) proposes, and which will be considered next, is best understood through territories and regions. With all this, the importance of regions in world economic affairs becomes clearer. Yet how is it that consumer elements such as food and wine are being used to promote regional difference when they have never traditionally been the focus of regional development in the past (Pritchard & McManus 2000)? A part answer seems to lie in the growing relevance of the culture economy, a concept that will be dealt with now.

2.3.3 The increasing importance of the culture economy

Ray (1998) and others (Kneafsey 2001; Tellstrom, Gustafsson & Mossberg 2005) have recognised the usefulness of culture in promoting economic growth and change. The importance of economic survival (Cooke & Morgan 1998), and the role of locals in pursuing such survival, has emphasised the importance of inter-regional competition. Thus, whatever an area can use to improve its position will be capitalised upon. Culture is no exception (Sheil 2005). The importance of the connectedness between culture and the economy is supported by Lash and Urry (1994, p. 347) who assert that, ‘... the economy is increasingly culturally inflected and that culture is more and more economically inflected’. So widespread is this phenomenon now that Tellstrom et al. (2005) can claim it is almost impossible to distinguish between the commercial and the cultural as influences on rural economic growth. Such thinking has prompted the idea of a culture economy. The culture economy is mainly concerned with production; that is, the territory or region, its cultural assets and the variety of connected actors who gather and promote them to enhance the interests of the area (Ray 1998).

A way forward then is to commodify culture, to concretise it, and promote the products to tourists as difference. Many aspects of culture can be marshalled to improve the social and economic well-being of a region. Food and wine are among them. For, according to Richards (2002) and others (Frochot 2003; Hall, CM & Mitchell 2000a; Hall, CM, Mitchell &

Sharples 2003; Hjalager & Richards 2002), food and wine are premier cultural indicators. Moreover, Richards (2002, p. 3) believes that,

As competition between tourism destinations increases, local culture is becoming an increasingly valuable source of new products and activities to attract and amuse tourists. Gastronomy has a particularly important role to play in this, not only because food is central to the tourist experiences, but also because gastronomy has become a significant source of identity formation in postmodern societies.

Richards' sentiments support arguments that have gone before about the relevance of culinary tourism and food, wine and identity (see section 2.2.7). A noteworthy strength of the way food and wine are used as cultural objects is that they are living products within a vital industry. Food and wine are immediately physical, sensual, social and cultural. Sharing food and wine can be the focus of live and lively social interaction with the possibility of vibrant commensality, a very desirable aspect of tourism. Hall and Mitchell (2000b) comment upon the passive presentation of much heritage and ecotourism, activities that subject participants to ossified versions of culture that lack immediacy and punch. By contrast, Armesto López and Gómez Martín (2006) suggest that gastronomy is not just contemplative and intellectual. Gastronomy enables people to approach culture in a more experiential, participative and satisfying way. As Lévi-Strauss famously noted, food is 'good to think with' (1968, p. 87).

Ray (1998) proposes a number of operational modes through which the culture economy can be understood. He bases these upon two notions of regional development. First, a region/territory can have a pre-existing identity. An example is Burgundy in France (Goldstein et al. 2005), where cultural artefacts take their identity and power from the region's historic renown. Secondly, an identity may indeed be constructed and cultural markers used to establish it. Silicon Valley in California, USA, would be a case of the latter (Khanna 1997). The operational modes proposed are, one, cultural commoditisation; two, the region as culture for visitors and, three, the region as culture for residents.

Mode 1, cultural commoditisation, is about products or services which have a definite place association and therefore can be marketed directly, or used within an area promotion. This could be any of food, wine, cuisine or other cultural aspects. Eden Valley riesling (Lehmann 2007), King Island cheese (Berger 2005) or the cuisine of the Barossa (Heuzenroeder 1999), all from South Australia, are examples.

In this mode, Ray (1998) suggests that place, and whatever is associated with it, is used to promote a product or service. The product or service, in effect, contains the essence of the

region or area—the place. This can mean the incorporation of rurality itself; the idea of a clean, green, unpolluted and natural countryside bound up in a package and pushed as a selling point. But it can be nostalgia. For such thinking is often associated with supposed glories of the past as urban peoples yearn for the return of a pastoral yesteryear supposedly imbued with peace, quality and a sense of community (Duruz 1999). Such attributes are commodified, ostensibly locked within the product or service and available to the consumer upon purchase. For instance, in discussing King Island in a regional food magazine, the editors wrote,

It's the island effect. You won't find a [McDonald's], KFC or Pizza Hut ... There's not a billboard to be seen. The businesses still carry the names of local people, not national chains. And when you drop off your rental car at the airport, you leave the keys in the ignition. After all, why steal a car when there's nowhere to hide? ... Remember your childhood holidays down (or up) the coast? ... You can recapture that feeling on the island. Rent a cottage with a view of the ocean, buy your produce fresh off the boat or straight from the dairy. Cook it the simple way, on the barbecue, maybe with a touch of local mountain pepper. Sit by a driftwood fire and watch the waves come all the way from South America (Harden 2005, pp. 17-21)

Such writing is replete with nostalgic references to quaint, bygone days and attempts to sell those concepts *within* the products. Such associations would indeed appear to be the very essence of branding (Cai 2002; McEnally & de Chernatony 1999), a subject that will be taken up later.

In Mode 2, Ray (1998) sees a territory or region constructed through its cultural resources and sold to people outside the area. This is, in effect, establishing an area through utilising the resources it already possesses but perhaps does not value strongly. Regions can be constructed for different reasons; to resurrect or develop economic potential, for instance, or simply promote and maintain difference (Lagendijk, Arnoud 2001; Trabalzi 2004). Examples of the latter are Catalonia and the Basque region of Spain, provinces that have sought to depict themselves as different from other regions of the nation (Keating 2001). Food and tourism are means of doing this for, '... food tourism has become a product, whereby a destination's distinct character [can be] sold through food' (Tellstrom, Gustafsson & Mossberg 2005, p. 351).

Regional differentiation can be achieved by either a bottom-up or a top down process. In the former, local actors promote the cause. In the latter, the approach is driven by public and political figures (Lagendijk, Arnoud 2001; Trabalzi 2004). A main point of this mode is that regional cuisines can be seen as invented rather than innate traditions (Tellstrom, Gustafsson

& Mossberg 2005). Tuscany in Italy used its food history and culture to establish its pre-eminence as a culinary region (Trabalzi 2004). There is no reason why other regions of Italy with equally worthy culinary cultures could not have done so. Such inventions can then be used to interact further with the idea of a regional identity, each boosting the other in turn. This subject will be returned to later (in section 2.3.4).

Regional identities can be used to promote any number of purposes. Economic development is one; cultural survival and/or separation are others. Whatever the purpose, identities need to be 'sold' in two directions; first, to people external to the region itself, the principal focus of Mode 2 and, secondly, to the people within the region, the inhabitants for whom the identity will be paramount. The latter is the focus of Mode 3 (Ray 1998). If a regional identity is to be accepted, it needs to be taken up by citizens, local businesses, officialdom and the like. The regional constructs have to be assimilated; people need to be convinced, largely through narrative, of their relevance and significance. Narratives and stories will be taken up again later in this chapter (see section 2.3.7). In short, however, a narrative exploits and expands existing stories and myths of the local and regional area. They can be historical or contemporary, written or pictorial and include artefacts, interior decorations, texts and the like (Tellstrom, Gustafsson & Mossberg 2005). The factors that drive narrative can be quite banal but all the more effective because of it. Tellstrom et al. (2005, p. 347) use the words of a restaurant manager about chairs to address the point.

“The dining room chairs are made just over the road, 150 meters [sic] from here, painted the special shade of blue of our district. People who visit us say that the chairs are the same colour as the river here. My family, and also my husband's, have always had this type of chair at home, and they've been used around here for ages.”

Establishing an identity is a vital component of the theory underpinning local development initiatives; particularly those that seek to generate endogenous development in marginalised or declining areas. An Australian example is the famous nineteenth century bushranger (outlaw) Ned Kelly, whose memory and myth is used to promote the small and struggling Victorian country town of Glenrowan; indeed he is its main claim to fame and one now associated with wine as well (Frost 2006). Sometimes, highlighting local resources means extricating them from the dominant culture and establishing them as different. This can be a mutual endeavour that raises consciousness about the region and so promotes economic ends through recognition of a common and coherent identity. Thus, the identity process invites

local agencies and entrepreneurs to commit themselves to the culture-territory by presenting common promotional images that business and other bodies can exploit (Ray 1998).

In summary, and looking at the implications wrought by such theorising, Ray (1998, p. 7) suggests,

As a consequence of this new 'spirit of capitalism', space — including rural space — is being differentiated into overlapping territories each of which is defined by the repertoire of symbolic values attached to it. For rural areas, the symbolism seems to be taking two forms: it may include various attributes of generic rurality such as perceptions of environmental quality, local-ness, communitarianism and tranquillity; and it may also reflect territorial specificity (culture/history, geomorphology and so on).

From there Ray (1998) develops the general idea of a consumption countryside localised into any number of territorial economies. Against this he juxtaposes the idea of territories made up of a variety of actors involved in strategic socio-cultural and economic activities for their own and territorial-collective purposes. Such territorial economies would appear to be in a state of perpetual change in terms of their overall number and their individual boundaries. It is not difficult to move from Ray's (1998; 2000) ideas on general consumption and territorial economies to the development of trails capitalising on unique cultural phenomena as a means of difference and economic enhancement.

The establishment of food and wine trails, however, does require action. Neo-endogenous development takes up the ideas of how such action can be organised.

2.3.4 Neo-endogenous development

The implications for the culture economy, regions and identity have been brought together under the over-arching concept of neo-endogenous development (Ray 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001, 2003). Neo-endogenous development infers that rural and urban development is at once bottom-up and a top-down process. That is, it involves people and skills from both inside and outside an area; producers and consumers, government and private enterprise, hosts and tourists, people doing what they can in concert both with outside others as well as their neighbours.

Clark (2005) acknowledges the relevance of neo-endogenous development. The use of territorial assets in building competitive advantage is important in exploiting local, regional, national and global markets. This theorising is supported by Arfini et al. (2002, p. 1) who, in discussing wine trails,

... see the territory as a “container “of natural, environmental and *know-how* factors From here, the view of the territorial economy as a system of relationships between economic, individual and collective subjects is growing ever stronger [emphases in original].

Ray (1999a; 1999b; 2003) suggests that the neo-endogenous development approach has three essential characteristics:

- i. Territorialisation
- ii. Local human resources,
- iii. Participation and contextualisation.

First, neo-endogenous development is about territories rather than particular socio-economic sectors, or whole regions. As a result, it is not just about primary producers or retail businesses or tourist operators—or any functional approach to rural matters. It is about a place that is not necessarily a region; it could therefore be about a locality—and a food and wine trail. Ray (1999b) sees territories or place as central because he believes regional and state initiatives to be too general and broad to meet specific local needs, a point consistent with previous commentary on the changing role of government. In Ray’s case, referring to Europe, such an attitude could be driven by the variety of small cultural regions that risk being subjugated to the immense European project. In Australia it is more likely to be driven by local people because central manipulation of the large state levers of economic performance may not make much of a difference locally—even if governments choose to be involved (Tonts 2000). Local people may have to do it themselves within small territories that make sense to them and to others.

Second, valorisation of local human resources refers to the identification and mobilisation of local people and cultural assets to assist a community. It is about the people, their skills, knowledge and commitment. It can also be about the place, its history, culture and economic circumstances. Thus it can be about an identity being constructed for the particular place and people by those people (Clark 2005; Lagendijk, Arnoud 2001; Ray 1999b). It can thus be about the people involved in the development of a food and wine trail.

Finally, participation and contextualisation refer to the participation of people in assisting with the design and implementation of economic activity around a particular problem or issue. Ray (1999a; 1999b; 2003) does not appear to be saying that all local approaches are going to be successful in themselves, rather that in order for them to be successful, neo-endogenous development has to incorporate the ideas of others; governments, local authorities, private providers and consumers.

2.3.5 Key factors of production

Ray further identifies the key factors of production as symbolic goods and services, human capital and cultural capital.

Symbolic goods and services link in with consumer demands for products with other-than-use-value, also referred to as commodity aesthetics (Tinic 1997), a cluster of ideas that has been introduced previously (see section 2.2.7). Such concepts assume that food is more than just a means to physical survival, it can also be symbolic (Bell 2002). When people choose products based less on their nutrient value and more on their symbolism, the choice can be diverse. Ethical consumerism, organic foods, ethno-tourism, environmentalism and food as social identifier are all possible symbols. These are the principal other-than-use values that could be among motivations for tourists to travel a food and wine trail. Symbolism can also be incorporated into the production side of food and wine trails. Regions that register their foodstuffs in some way can design in their own cultural identity.

Economists are used to differentiating among three forms of capital; physical, human and natural (Throsby 1999). Physical capital is the aggregation of material products; buildings, machines, tools, technology and the like. Natural capital is the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources provided by nature. Human capital refers to the skills, talent, enthusiasm and motivation of workers, employers, students and citizens—people. To this initial understanding of capital, Throsby (1999) proposed an addition—cultural capital. This idea was originally put forward by Bourdieu (1986) who saw it as the competencies necessary for success within society's high status culture. Bourdieu categorised it in three ways. First are the individual characteristics of the human being, elements of his or her mind and body (embodied). Next are cultural goods such as paintings, pictures and books (objectified). Finally, there are earned credentials, skills or competences (institutionalised) otherwise acknowledged by society.

Throsby (1999, p. 6) complemented these ideas by advocating cultural capital as, '... the stock of cultural value embodied in an asset'. He went beyond that, however, to propose two forms of such capital; tangible and intangible. By the former he largely implied what is commonly known as cultural heritage, buildings, material artefacts and the like. Intangible is different. It is,

... the set of ideas, practices, beliefs, traditions and values which serve to identify and bind together a given group of people, however the group may be determined ... [that can] give rise to a flow of services which may form part

of private final consumption and/or may contribute to the production of future cultural goods (Throsby 1999, p. 7)

Cultural capital could thus be manifested in many forms including gastronomy, land management ideas, agricultural methods and patterns, social rituals, history, culture and language forms. It is the array of features, tangible and intangible, that could be used to differentiate one region or area from another, one food and wine trail from another. It also implies that cultural capital accumulates simultaneously at the level of individuals and collectives; it is both personal and shared property. This is the source of what has been referred to previously as the culture economy.

2.3.6 Coordination

Ray identifies four methods he believes have relevance in bringing the disparate strands so identified together. These would appear particularly relevant to the activities of food and wine trails.

First, business people enter into voluntary cooperative alliances because it makes business sense to do so. It is in their self-interest. As Snavely and Tracy (2002, p. 64) remark, ‘collaboration takes place out of self-interest; organizations perceive a tangible benefit perhaps in the form of capturing financial resources or strengthening the organization through mission accomplishment’. It is possible to see the components of food and wine trails, the actual small businesses, getting together to form a cooperative endeavour, a trail, because it is in their interest to do so, immediately or in the future.

Secondly, coordination can occur through ethical/markets/communities, like-minded people joining together in activities consistent with their own beliefs and values. According to Ray this largely depends upon cultural homogeneity that is not always easy to engender.

Third, social capital, is an informal norm that encompasses cooperation and trust. It is seen to be a basis of civil society (Putnam 1993) and alluded to earlier in the discussion of trust and regard (see section 2.2.5). It is considered to be a principal support for successful businesses, networks, and group developments and thus can be seen to be potentially instrumental in food and wine trails. Social capital is a common phrase in business parlance, possibly one of the most popular exports from sociology into the wider world (Portes 1998). Part of its popularity is due to the capacity of social capital to explain anomalies in economic development through engaging with intangible aspects such as collaboration, confidence in others and trust. Thus, social capital is related to matters of trust and regard as evidenced in

the work of Lee (Lee, J et al. 2005; Lee, R 2000) and others (Hinrichs 2000; Sage 2003b) reported previously.

Again, it was Bourdieu (1986) who of social capital. He saw it as, ‘... the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’ (p. 248). Such views were supported by Portes (1998) who lauded both deliberate sociability and its utility in the achievement of ends. More simply put, social capital explains how some people do better because they are somehow better connected with others (Burt 2005). Lee et al. (2005, p. 271, emphases in original) reinforce this social aspect proposing that it is,

... meaningless to speak of social capital unless it is conceptualised as inhering in social relationships ... it is only through social relationships, *networks* of social actors, that social capital can be mobilised and utilised.

The relevance of social capital to food and wine trails is alluded to in research conclusions on Italian food and wine routes that reflects upon the difficulty of gaining trust and cooperation (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002, p. 17).

What is most needed is above all the capacity and the willingness of the operators to interact with each other to create a real “network” which is able to valorise the whole production system within which the Route is located.

Undoubtedly trust is a component part of social capital. Putnam (1993), who was largely responsible for popularising the concept in the 1990s, suggests that trust and networking are indeed critical. In one of the more telling documents to analyse the failure of a trail, Plummer, Telfer and Hashimoto (2006) identified a range of factors that contributed to the demise of a beverage trail partnership. They included differences of trust, commitment, goals, time and decision-making. That two trails should suffer from trust and cooperation difficulties is both indicative of the strength and utility of social capital and of the complexity of establishing it.

The fourth category, coordination, is probably representative of the people with the most immediate and powerful connection to social capital. These are the people Ray (1998; 1999b) and Lagendijk (2001) refer to as an *animateurs*, people able to work with others to actively promote mutual ends. The employment of such individuals by territorial partnerships can have a significant impact upon development interventions. This is indeed the case in Australia where *animateurs*, either professional or voluntary, can be of huge importance to food and wine promotion. As a well-known celebrity chef from Mildura, Australia, and an acknowledged promoter of regional food, proclaims on his website,

‘Stefano de Pieri is committed to the development of regional produce and acknowledges the champions of regional Victoria who are making our wine and food industry vibrant and exciting’ (de Pieri 2006). An article on another well-known chef, restaurateur, hotelier and ‘champion’ of Victorian food suggests that, ‘long before “local” and “seasonal” became buzz words, [Alla] Wolf-Tasker was a passionate advocate of close-to-home, straight-from-the-farm produce’ (Valent 2003).

But it is not only those whose significant social capital enables them to gain access to national media outlets that are important to food and wine trails. There are others who may not be as well located but who are able nonetheless to capitalise on the, ‘... networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam 1993, p. 1). The capacity for local people to take up leadership challenges has been reported (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003). This role can also be undertaken by government employees for, ‘Regional Tourism Manager with the Moira Shire Council, Merran Socha has been heavily involved in getting the Farm Gate Trail Map off the ground’ (ABC 2006). Research done by Blackman et al. (2004) on case studies of tourism in peripheral areas acknowledged that leadership emerged as a major theme in the majority of cases. And, as has been said elsewhere,

... to be successful in tourism development effort, there needs to emerge at least one individual, who, in addition to being somewhat knowledgeable about the tourism industry, is enthusiastic, energetic and able to motivate others (Long & Knockalls cited in Lee, D & Chok 2005).

In section 2.3.2 narratives and stories were mentioned as the principal ways in which people both internal and external to a region/territory could come to be convinced of what an area is and what it has to offer. The importance of narratives and stories to regions and to food and wine trails will be taken up now.

2.3.7 Regions, identity and the role of narrative

This section is divided into two parts; the first looks at the role of narrative more broadly while the second considers the role and development of specific themes and stories.

Stories, narratives and myth are important to the development and carriage of regional identity. Trabalzi (2004) implies this about Tuscany, Italy. Why is narrative important?

Barber (2001, p. 61) answers this by suggesting that,

We wage battles to determine dominant narratives because it is through stories that we build an understanding of place and of ourselves in connection to that place. The histories we produce tell us who and what is important and why,

they explain the relationships between subjects, and more importantly, they provide context for the present.

Conflicting narratives are thus not just different stories but weapons in a battle, the battle for regional success and/or supremacy. That this is so is because stories help decide ‘context for the present’ (p. 61). They can influence the decisions over the people and places to be given legitimacy. They provide direction for actions to be taken, money to be spent. In times of limited resources narratives help determine winners and losers. This applies to tourism as much as anything else (Cameron 2003). The success of food and wine narratives, as with Tuscany (Trabalzi 2004), can impact upon the way that people spend their time, leisure and money.

Regions and territories compete with each other for resources, customers, sales, funding, staff and tourists. One way to compete is with a better narrative, a story that will encourage people to visit one region in preference to another. Some narratives are based upon the stuff of geography—mountains, streams, beaches and the like (Tourism Australia 2006)—a product of nature and perception. Others are more contrived, imagined, the product of experience and vision. It is easy to concur with Lang (2001, p. vi) that,

... a fair portion of regionalism’s content is a matter of consciousness. Put differently, we imagine our corner of the world in a self-referenced way. We claim the region as our place, and thereby we create a means of connecting individuals and groups to the landscape. It goes without saying that regional consciousness is multiple, and there are many versions and many viewpoints. It depends on who is doing the imagining and what angle or vision they use.

Narratives told in support of regions are thus contestable and the concept of regional identity is indeed a fraught one based as it is on contested social constructs and processes (Paasi 2003). Once established, however, the content of narratives has the capacity to persist and be difficult to shift or alter (Campbell 2004).

2.3.7.1 Trails, themes and stories

The previous section established the connection between regionalism and narrative; the power of story to assist regions. In a sense they are meta-narratives, stories that convey meanings for large areas. It is now appropriate to turn to the relationship between trails and stories, the use of narrative in developing and presenting specific trails. Food and wine trails are manifested as themed products. They use the idea of gastronomy as a motif to persuade potential visitors to stop at various food and beverage producers along a designated route (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Frochot 2000). A theme is a

consistent idea, a story, and a reason to develop one is because, ‘most food is sold with a story’ (Freidberg 2003, p. 4).

The main benefits of tourism are said to be experiential (Leisen 2001). In order to explore such a rationale, Hayes and MacLeod (2007) investigated heritage trails in the UK using the idea of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999) as a base. Pine and Gilmore (1999) maintain that experience is the fourth economic phase after extraction, goods, and services. According to such theory, modern consumers are looking for new and different experiences and businesses can respond to that by developing them. Armesto López and Gómez Martin (2006, p. 170) agree that there is a trend in gastronomic tourism that is,

... moving towards an entertainment-based or dramatised approach to resources and space (in order that they be enjoyed or experienced first-hand), as well as more participative interpretation (so as to provide the creative and enriching experiences so much in demand from today’s tourists).

The importance of experience infers that tourists have indeed changed their orientation. Perhaps there is now a desire for something other than the traditional four S’s; sun, sea, sand and sex. Contemporary tourists (see also section 2.2.7) now seem more appreciative of the four I’s; information, insight, involvement and inspiration (Buhalis & Paraskevas 2002; Honeywill 2004; Poon 2003). It now appears that more tourists want to do something in the places they visit rather than just relax or be passive onlookers. Certainly this is reinforced by British tourism authorities which have promoted the theme, ‘Experience, Discover and explore’ to tourists intent on visiting that country (VisitBritain 2005). It was also supported by Charters and Fountain (2006) whose study on generational differences at winery cellar doors strongly supported the idea of experience as important.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) divide experiences into four distinct categories; entertainment, education, aesthetic experience and escapism. Hayes and MacLeod (2007) used this construct to investigate heritage trails. They interpreted such trails as a way of organising visitor experience through the provision of a meaningful route that can be followed on foot or by vehicle. After completing their study of brochure material from a sampling of 75 British trails, the researchers concluded that creating a powerful story should be the real objective of trail developers seeking to provide a memorable experience for visitors. Moreover, the research indicated that story success is dependent upon coherence, genre, type and use of language as well as depth and credibility. Finally they gave credence to sensory elements, experiences other than aural in comprehending the story of a route.

Mason and O'Mahony (2007) followed up the idea of stories for food and wine trails. They endorsed the importance of stories and suggested that, for food and wine trail businesses, appropriate narratives were going to be derived from four sources; place, product, process and people, which they elaborated upon. In choosing such stories, businesses should be mindful of the nature of their visitors whose interests—and therefore the attractiveness and relevance of stories—were probably going to revolve around issues of health, cuisine, lifestyle, regionalism, environment and rurality.

2.3.8 Regions; food, wine and identity

Legendijk (2001) put forward a number of reasons for the increased import of regions (see Section 2.3.2). In summary, regions encourage local knowledge development, and knowledge is central to economic success. Regions do this through agglomeration and proximity and the results can include enhanced status, reputation, success and profits. Ray and neo-endogenous development (section 2.3.4) established the importance of territories and the ways in which their identities can be created. The results can be different in both case as Marsden (1999, pp. 503-4) suggests,

Rural areas differ markedly in their economic structure and activity, their natural and human resources, the peripherality of their location, their demographic and social conditions. They are affected in different ways and extents by the various trends affecting society in general and how the diversity of local, rural conditions articulates with general processes (yielding a range of local outcomes).

The focus of this research is food and wine trails, and regions and territories have the capacity to generate gastronomic meaning. This can be reflected in trails as Brunori and Rossi (2000) suggest. The ways this can be done will now be considered.

In discussing the ways in which regional identity and economic growth assist each other Trabalzi (2004) cites the example of Tuscany, Italy. Tuscany took historic architecture and monuments, food products and simple food traditions and turned a previously little-known rural backwater into a destination for food and culture lovers from all over the world.

Trabalzi acknowledges the importance of narrative and *animateurs* to this process.

Animateurs (see also section 2.3.5) are leaders, formal and informal—shopkeepers, citizens, politicians and entrepreneurs—who take responsibility for developing the idea of a region through discovering and reconstructing its identity to serve contemporary purposes.

Trabalzi (2004) intimated that food is part of regional identity. Certainly, a superficial connection between food and cultural identity is simple to illustrate. In a wry vocal tribute to

the alleged Australian veneration of the barbecue, Scots-born songwriter, Eric Bogle (2005) penned the following lyrics.

The Scots eat lots of haggis, the French eat snails and frogs
The Greeks go crackers over their moussakas and the Chinese love hot dogs
Welshmen love to have a leek, the Irish like their stew
But you just can't beat that half-cooked meat at an Aussie barbecue.

Most of the food affections or afflictions characterised by Bogle are well-known. They are national stereotypes, evidence of the way people construct narratives in order to contrast 'us' with 'them' for, as Amilien (2005, p. 1) suggests, 'answering the needs of western social evolution, food consumption has become a distinctive feature of collective as well as individual identities'. Significant foodstuffs or food practices contribute to identity; they are deeply ingrained in the way people see themselves and others. Connections real or imagined between Koreans and kim chi, Russians and borscht, the Polish people and cabbage rolls, only reflect and reinforce such views.

Moving away from cultural stereotypes, however, Marshall (1979) long ago noted that food traditions are a principal part of the complex system that turns culture and geography into regional character. Identity is not simply derived from the food product; it can also come from the traditions or foodways (food practices) that pick, process and prepare it. Hilchey and Gillespie (2003, p. 3), who undertook research on food and place in the USA, reinforce this when they suggest that,

... local food and agriculture together possibly constitute an ultimate expression of place. For, it is in food that the tangible products of the land and human labor are hand-crafted in ways that reflect the cultural uniqueness of places.

This quote appears to suggest that food and its taste are the result of human interaction with produce. Cabbage can be but cabbage, but it can also be borscht, cabbage rolls or kim chi depending on its origins and the cultural practice of a family or region.

The French have developed arguments linking place, taste and certain types of agricultural production with quality. These have ultimately helped to define French cuisine. They have been so successful in this, at least to their own satisfaction, that in 1925, Madame Pampille, an early French food writer, was able to assert that bouillabaisse is, '... the triumph of Marseilles, it is only good when eaten in Marseilles. Don't try to eat it in Paris' (cited in Trubek 2005, p. 264). Of such discourse creation is identity derived.

Moreover, the idea of identity is not frozen; rather it is in a state of flux, of transience (Tomlinson 1991). The discourse of nations and regions requires identity to be seen as

frozen, an idea reflected light-heartedly in Bogle's lyrics (2005). Muchnik, Biénabe and Cerdan (2005), however, assert that identities are unstable, that they evolve in concert with other socio-cultural and economic changes. Identities are socially constructed and food identities are no different. They can alter. If they are considered as frozen then that is done for a purpose. Food has no intrinsic identity. There is nothing about the ingredients of cassoulet—beans, sausage and confit—that relate it to Castelnaudary in France by right. Legend has it that cassoulet was put together during the 100 years War with England. The sustenance it gave so fortified the citizens of that Languedoc town that they repelled the invaders (Barer-Stein 1999). Keeping the dish static and its provenance local helps maintain Castelnaudary's identity—and tourism economy. Gatti and Incerti (in Brunori & Rossi 2000) assert that the purpose of a food and wine trail is the exploration and understanding by tourists of the products, cuisine and culture of the area. If this is the case then it would seem feasible that food and wine trail reflect some of the theoretical propositions developed here.

The connection between cassoulet and Castelnaudary brings up another point; the tendency to associate regional foods with bio-climatic conditions. The geography and weather of a place are often connected to the unique nature of products that grow there. This has particular resonance for grapes where much has been made of the connection between specific locality and wine character. Locality is often referred to in this context as *terroir*, '... a French term that cannot be translated because it refers at once to a physical and a cultural place' (Amilien 2005, p. 5). Distinctions in *terroir* determine minute shades of flavour that can be distinguished by cognoscenti who are willing to pay more for the privilege of drinking wine with different character (Vaudour 2002). An example given for this is the wine made from similar cabernet sauvignon and merlot varietal grapes produced in South Australia, Bordeaux in France and the Napa Valley of California. They taste remarkably different (Trubek 2005). Important administrative-political decisions flow from such nuances (Moran 1993) although the contemporary relevance of *terroir* may not be as important as perhaps it once was. The significance of minute distinctions in flavour seems to have yielded somewhat to demands for overall consistency and quality in a capricious marketplace (Demossier 2004).

Nevertheless, such distinctions are still of importance in the wine industry. It is important to recognise, however, that the use of words such as regional or local does not necessarily connote fixed attributes with fresh food, or food products. Dijon, in Burgundy, France, is

known for its mustard; the city is synonymous with the condiment and its use. Mustard seeds have been grown in the area for hundreds of years, at least from the fourteenth century. These days, however, most French mustard seeds are imported from Canada. Dijon farmers have largely given up mustard growing in favour of more lucrative crops such as colza, used in the manufacture of canola oil (Serti 1995). What Burgundians have retained are the skills and intellectual property connected to making mustard. So food links and identity with a place can change from geographical and bio-climatic connectedness to those that exploit skills and know-how.

2.4 Local environment— a summary of critical factors to date

The purpose of this literature review is to assess published studies and papers in a wide variety of fields in order to garner factors that might possibly be critical for food and wine trails. The assessment of such material was taken up through the following categories

1. External factors,
11. Local conditions,
111. Internal subsystems; the management, personnel and technology of trails.

The first half of this chapter looked at external factors that could affect development. The second half of the chapter has looked at local circumstances and conditions that might have an impact.

From this latter analysis it can be seen that regions might have relevance. Regions have taken on critical importance as a way of understanding how economies operate and how they establish themselves as entities in a highly competitive landscape that privileges place (or region) more than nation. The strength and utility of regional food identities was strongly borne out in European contexts such as Tuscany and Burgundy. It is also possible that regionalism associated with local food and wine might be impacting upon the growth and development of food and wine trails in Australia.

Another factor brought out in the review of literature is the changing relevance and role of governments, local, state and Commonwealth of Australia. Changes to the world economy largely encompassed under the heading of neo-liberalism have caused Commonwealth and state governments alike to take a more detached approach to agricultural policy and practice putting the responsibility for survival firmly into the hands of the producer and, by implication, local officialdom. Local government appears to have been both forced and

encouraged to build an interest in economic development as a means to sustain itself and its dependent communities.

The final strong point of this part of the review of literature was the relevance of the cultural economy, the importance of neo-endogenous development—a means by which regional development can be considered— and the various types of capital that go to support it. The cultural economy is a means by which local regions can capitalise on local features and characteristics in order to pursue a different identity, and the revenue that such difference can generate. This ties in strongly with food, wine and regions and together offers a strong means to regional recognition. Neo-endogenous development outlines the ways and means by which regions can be established and the methods through which that might occur. This involved the importance of local human resources. If the development of regions is important and, similarly, responsibility is now being ceded more to local levels then the action of local people in support of their own and regional prosperity becomes more important. This is certainly addressed in the notion of social capital, the means that individuals have at their disposal to direct and control change.

Material to follow. Chapter Two has described and investigated the literature with the potential to identify factors affecting the development of food and wine trails. Chapter Three which follows encompasses possible factors as they relate to the performance of food and wine trails, their day-to-day function and operation. These matters will include technologies, management and personnel.

Chapter Three: Literature Review, Part 2

Chapter Three turns from potential development factors to consider literature that looks at matters which might affect food and wine trail performance. By performance is meant those potential management, maintenance and other factors with the capacity to influence day to day trail operation and function. This encompasses critical factors within the three main areas touched upon in Chapter Two (Fig 2.2); viz, technologies (3.1), management (3.2) and personnel (3.3). The first area to be considered will be technologies, the physical and social methodologies through which trails achieve their aims.

Chapter One: Introduction	<u>3. 1 Technologies</u> 3. 1. 1 Promotion and theme 3. 1. 2 Roads and parking 3. 1. 3 Signage 3. 1. 4 Brochures and the internet 3. 1. 5 Food, wine and marketing 3. 2 Management and clusters 3. 3 Personnel 3. 4 Performance factors—a summary of critical factors to date
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two	
Chapter Four: Methodology	
Chapter Five: Findings	
Chapter Six: Conclusion	
References and Appendices	

3. 1 Technologies

This section includes promotion and theme (3.1.1), roads and parking (3.1.2), signage (3.1.3), brochures and the internet (3.1.4) and food and wine marketing (3.1.5). These are all concepts derived from consideration of the relevant literature (for instance, Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004; Frochot 2000; Hashimoto & Telfer 2003; Knowd 2003a).

3.1.1 Promotion and theme

The partial website map that follows (Fig. 3.1) is used to illustrate and advertise the Kangaroo Island Food and Wine Trail (Good Food Kangaroo Island 2005) in South Australia (see Chart 4 in section 4.8.1). It appears typical of the genre and is designed mainly for road users, motorists and cyclists. It shows roads with their relative size and possible conditions

and identifies geographical features such as bays and promontories. In addition, it distinguishes the businesses that are included on the food and wine trail itself. There are additional elements incorporated, apparently for the internet tourist. These are symbols that the intending visitor can use prior to travel in order to gain further audio-visual information about the island and its food and wine possibilities.

Hardy (2003) makes four points about themed tourism routes, one of which seems to have particular pertinence here but others will be considered elsewhere in this thesis. The four points are the value of attractions, the importance of the marketing mix, the worth of stakeholder participation and, finally the relevance of collaborative planning and interpretation. It is the latter point, interpretation, which will be considered at this point.

Hardy (2003) paraphrases Freeman Tilden, a late twentieth century American proponent of parks as educative tools, who notes that interpretation is an educational activity,

... which should aim to reveal meanings and relationships, rather than simply to communicate factual information. In addition to providing information and enhancing the visitor experience, interpretation can educate visitors, change their attitudes and beliefs towards certain topics and help to facilitate sustainable tourism by encouraging certain forms of behaviour (p. 325).



Figure 3.1: Kangaroo Island website

Interpretation has particular

relevance to themed routes.

According to Hayes and Macleod (2007), themed routes have a focus, a key idea or ideas—indeed, a theme, as has been discussed previously (see section 2.3.7.1).

The purpose of the route is to elaborate upon the theme, make the connections, and establish the relationships. The idea behind the route is its theme and everything is selected to support that.

Interpretation—signage and

material that aims, ‘... to reveal meanings and relationships’ (Hayes & MacLeod 2007, p. 325), would thus seem important to the development of food and wine trails. Knudson, Cable and Beck (2003, p. 240) are discussing walking trails but the message could be important to

all trails; 'content planning starts with a thematic approach. To do this, pick a theme and feature the stops so they relate to it and develop its whole story'.

The Kangaroo Island website illustrates the importance of pursuing a theme, of developing a story which both reflects and reinforces the island's tourist potential. The audio-visual material on the website reinforces the theme of Kangaroo Island produce as natural, clean and pure and gives further information about the food and wine trail itself to intending drive tourists. This is information to help intending visitors make more sense of the trip.

Interpretation can take place through website material but it can also be done through roadside signs, on-site displays, artefacts, promotional material and personal interactions between trail business staff and customers. For example, the Cider and Perry Trail in Somerset, UK (Sharples 2003) displays an old cider press at one of the apple orchards on the trail. This display has an accompanying sign to help elaborate upon the ancient history of cider production in the area and so augments the theme.

Interpretation thus seems part of an overall educational process related to cultural tourism and modern tourism itself. For according to the Victorian cultural heritage tourism plan, cultural tourism satisfies, '... the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters' (Tourism Victoria 2002a in section 1.4). Moreover, the attraction of cultural tourism has been forecast to grow. For it is proposed that Baby Boomers, the people born from 1946 - 1962, will, 'want to combine their travel with education making intellectually stimulating travel appealing' (Nordin 2005, p. 27).

This connection between interpretation, knowledge and education seems critical. The purported interest in cultural issues in tourism is almost a paradigm shift from tourism as entertainment to tourism as enrichment (Buhalis & Paraskevas 2002; Poon 2003). But such a change in focus requires a change in business energies and direction, and this might not be easy. For some wine producers seem highly product-focused and not overly enthused about tourists (Beames 2003). Moreover, as Macionis and Cambourne (2000, p. 232) observe, 'despite the often economic necessity of tourism, particularly for small wineries ... it remains essentially a secondary or tertiary activity'. The needs of tourists and the demands of tourism may not always be taken seriously in such an environment.

3.1.2 Roads and parking

It appears apposite that Hardy (2003) should include 'iconic touring routes' in the title of her article. The following quote taken from a report on Route 66, an American highway famous in song and literature, suggests some of the power that routes and roads can have on the imagination, and why they have become icons.

U.S. Highway 66—often referred to simply as Route 66—has a special hold on the American imagination and its name commonly evokes images of the romance of simpler times, progress in the development of the nation's economic and technological infrastructure, the visible despair of migrants on the road, the glory days of small businesses, and in myriad other ways the icons of a mobile nation, a nation on the road (Cassidy 2004, p. III).

This narrative draws on the history and broad experiences of the American people, which in turn drives the success of Route 66 as a themed route in its own right. People drive the route, just to drive the route. To have driven it is enough. In doing so they are content; they have driven to the heart of America.

While this might appear quite contemporary, Turnbull (2007), as indicated in the Introduction (see section 1.4), suggests that the desire to traverse trails (and relate stories or narratives) was possibly among the earliest uniquely human proclivities. Trails may even have been the foundations upon which human cognition and knowledge were based. For, 'from a performative perspective the making of knowledge is simultaneously the making of space and space is made by travelling' (Turnbull 2007, p. 142). Movement creates knowledge and travel is movement. Such thinking would seem compatible with claims that ideas of self and national identity persist in unreflexive, everyday activities and in popular cultural forms (Edensor 2005). Driving could be one such practice, tourism another. This phenomenon, the practice of forming cultural and geographical understanding through an array of mundane practices, is referred to by Billig (1995) as banal nationalism.

It is pertinent to recognise again the work of John Urry who argues that,

Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/ everyday and the extraordinary. Tourist experiences involve some aspect or element which induces pleasurable experiences which are, by comparison with the everyday, out of the ordinary.... This is not to say that other elements of the production of the tourist experience will not make the typical tourist feel that he or she is 'home from home', not too much 'out of place'. But potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life (1990, pp. 11-2).

Roads and trails can provide this means to difference. Hall and Boyne (2007) suggest that the idea of travelling an established trail or route is often used as a metaphor for life, exploration and self-discovery. The concept of road or trail conjures up a range of ideas—romance, freedom, mystery, mobility, independence, rebellion and adventure (Cassidy 2004; North 2005)—without being too far out of the tourist’s comfort zone. For while the road can be wild it is also emblematic that the area has been tamed in some way; that it has been secured by humans against the potential perils of wilderness. It represents a victory of man-made bitumen over crude, raw nature (Gordon & Lane 2007). Roads and trails provide material and symbolic means for movement from the everyday to the extraordinary.

A number of the contrary characteristics referred to can be sourced in the etymology of the English word ‘road’ which is cognate with meanings such as ride and raid (Oxford 2007). So historically ‘the road’ is etched deep in human understanding with contrary feelings of adventure and risk that those words imply. Similarly for the word ‘route’ which had its origins in the Latin word *rupta*, and implies a path driven by force. Whether this was by force of arms or force of labour is unclear but certainly words such as rupture and disrupt are taken from a similar source. Trail on the other hand, is located in the origins of pull or drag and principally connects with the idea of following something, on the trail of something. Its earliest roots also have resonance with the idea of an animal trail, a path left by wild or domesticated creatures. So in this sense, trail has a part source in the idea of a primitive food trail.

Little research could be found on the affect of road conditions on tourist attitudes. Good road surfaces would appear to be essential for tourist visitation, however. This was a point made in a submission by the Australian Tourism and Transport Authority to a NSW transport inquiry when they suggested that, ‘quality road infrastructure ... can support this by providing safer, more efficient routes for day-trippers and the short-break market’ (Johnstone-Donnet 2005).

Similarly with parking. While there was little direct comment upon it, the need for it was apparent. For instance, in the planning for a Scottish regional trail, attention was drawn to the need for an integrated set of visitor management proposals which addressed issues including signposting, car parking, footpath maintenance and development, interpretation and the provision of public toilets (Hughes 1995). Vehicle facilities seems a necessary part of all consideration about trails. A report on a Portuguese wine trail, for instance, commented that

it, ‘... must have easy vehicular access and navigation, as well as the ability to cope with the number of cars and visitors using it’ (Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004, p. 16).

3.1.2.1 Centres, Domains and Pathways

By and large, the road as construed in the previous section is a geographical feature, a physical property of the landscape albeit with affective implications. Yet this is not the only way it can be interpreted. Other understandings relate more to the capacity of roads to connect—and the idea of connection more broadly. Suvantola (2002) is one such theorist. Following Heidegger (1889-1976), he proposes that the human position in the world includes the idea that all people must ‘be’ somewhere, spatially as well as philosophically. In being in the world we recognise that,

... the spatial character of our being in the world is thus a primary element in our existence ... that forces us to overcome distances by establishing relationships. The result is a web of relations and references, a personal world that constitutes what is called existential space (p. 19).

For each human there is a spatio-temporal network that incorporates all the attachments they have made. In making these assessments, these relational connections, notions of the Other are also constructed; concepts often archetypal but frequently personalised versions of ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’.

Geography, and tourism as well, have typically relied upon the physical understanding of space and its features—oceans, cities, beaches, mountains, streams and sky. Suvantola (2002) and others (Amin 2004; Löfgren 2003) have directed attention towards the importance of relational space, the connections and the comprehension that come from the changing links that have developed largely as a result of, and are synonymous with, globalism. Löfgren (2003, p. 239) writes of a,

... new spatial logic, the ways in which actors, information, commodities and capital travel along new routes and connect in novel patterns. Time/space compressions appear that force people to reconceptualize their images of distance, reachability and synchronization.

Territories, regions, communities are having to be reconsidered as Urry (2000) has intimated. Whereas once communities were often close-knit, connected, quite often space-bound and homogeneous—products of a physical territory—residents of modern Western communities are perhaps more closely connected through the mobile phone and the internet to people who actually live at a distance from them rather than with their next-door neighbours. The construction of each individual’s existential space is as much a response to relational space as it is to physical geography.

The elements that comprise existential space as described by Suvantola (2002) (following Nordberg-Schulz) include centres, domains and pathways. While these can be interpreted physically, their meaning is to be taken metaphorically as well. ‘Centres are what we know directly in contrast to what we do not know or know less directly’ (2002, p. 26). A centre can be a home, a city, a place that is known; one’s culture, a good friend, a philosophy, even a football club that is familiar. As people leave centres they pass into worlds that are increasingly unfamiliar, descending finally into the unknown. Paths take travellers there—and back. Paths, roads, routes also help create new centres, new places with which the visitor can become familiar. ‘Paths are a means to leave, a possibility to something’ (p. 26). Paths, roads, routes imply action, movement, connection with others. They mediate the human desire to find and experience different places and return safely. Travel is a pathway (p. 26). Hence its relevance to Urry’s (1990) reference to the movement between the banal and the novel experience for tourists.

Domains are the areas outside of centres and paths. They are unknown areas for which people may well have constructed an image, such as in a view of the Other who lives there or the nature of the countryside that would be encountered. In general, domains are largely seen as homogeneous. If travellers have little or no knowledge of a country, there is a tendency for them to make generalisations about it—‘Australia is arid’, ‘The Germans are serious’; ‘Holland is flat’. Increasing familiarity with domains enables visitors to turn them into centres, places they know, people (centres) they are familiar with which, in turn, begins to alter their understanding.

McKercher (2006) reinforces Suvantola’s (2002) conceptions of spatial reality for some tourists when he suggests that there are indeed three domains for tourists within a city. He refers to these domains somewhat reconditely as 1.) *terra touristica*, 2.) *terra incognita* and 3.) *terra intimidatus*. Basically these represent zones where 1.) tourists are wanted and welcome and this is indicated, 2.) where tourists might go, but essentially there is little of interest for them, and 3.) areas where tourists are really not expected or wanted and that target locals specifically. Public pathways connect the nodes where tourists are welcome. Suvantola’s (2002) understanding encourages a richer understanding of these phenomena enabling as it does change and moderation to take place, a situation which McKercher’s typology does not easily support. Similarly Suvantola’s (2002) ideas enable consideration of the affective power of domains as well as the physical.

3.1.3 Signage

From centres, domains and pathways it is not a long step to signage. Signage is an important part of tourism (Ballantyne, R, Hughes & Moscardo 2006a) and appears none the less so for food and wine trails. In research conducted on the Bairrada Wine Route in Portugal (Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004) it was found that signage was fundamental to informing travellers about the wine producers. However, signage was seen as a significant problem. This was reflected in the comment that, 'the large majority (86%), do not agree with the current signage, and all see the need for it to be improved by being more precise' (2004, p. 21).

The immediate reasons for signage are to identify premises on a route and help travellers move successfully from one point to another. Yet there are other purposes, some not quite so apparent. One feature of signage is its ability to reinforce the theme created for the trail (Hayes & MacLeod 2007). A less obvious ability of signage is its capacity to reassure, to lessen anxiety. In the horde of promotional data, neon, billboards and advertising material that crowds and confuses the roadside littoral, clear signage is a boon. It comforts the travellers, gives them confidence that they are still heading in the right direction. Their importance is such that signs may be, 'barely noticed features except when they disappear or are notably absent in an unfamiliar, foreign landscape' (Edensor 2005, p. 108).

Research referred to by Olsen (2003) suggests that over 60 per cent of planning for extended vehicle trips is done before travellers leave home. Visitors are reassured therefore by the presence of themed routes and signs. (Themed routes are apparently seen as more quality-driven than others as well.) The existence of clear and quality promotional material, interpretive mechanisms and signage is considered critical to the success of themed routes. This is likely because signage could be crucial in keeping travellers on the trail, an important task given the flexible nature of much of drive tourism (Prideaux & Carson 2003).

In summary, tourism themed routes would seem to be more than roads with signage promoted to visitors. It appears that, if developed in cooperation with a range of agencies, they can make up an integrated information network that starts with maps and brochures, flows through signage and interpretation to attractions and experiences on the ground (Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004; Hayes & MacLeod 2007). Fully integrated themed routes include all of those components but not all themed routes are fully integrated (Olsen 2002, 2003).

Signage and interpretation have been criticised for what they do not do (Hughes 1998). Physical phenomena such as signs and displays can give only limited explanations, and they usually conform to mass tourist expectations of simplicity and ease of understanding. Tourism can and does have the capacity to organise the meaning of space—and simple signage simplifies understanding. Meaning is more complex than signage can usually convey, however. Meaning for tourism sites can be derived from many sources. It can be the product of tourist exchanges, backpackers reporting to each other on sights to see, for instance. It can be the result of corporate processes as with promotion for resort areas. It can be, as could be the case with trails, the product of local cooperation, the work of a small group of people aiming at their own economic betterment through tourism. Whatever the cause, as Hughes (1998) suggests, the power, ‘... of tourism is to reconfigure the existing cultural and physical endowment of places as they become installed in the more autonomous discourse of tourist consumption’ (1998, p. 21). Tourism sites carry descriptive signs the result of which is going to be a limited understanding or even distortion of the socio-cultural and political developments that have pre-figured their production.

Yet it also has been suggested that tourism is essentially about the creation or reworking of geographic landscapes as distinctive tourist destinations through reordering of history and culture (Ringer 1998). This is akin to the point put forward in the discussion of the ways in which regions are promoted and developed (see section 2.3). Tourism forces, ‘... destinations to establish their distinctiveness as cultural and natural attractions, rather than authentic places of cultural identity’ (1998, p. 8). This view is that destinations are constructed, after all, and often constructed with tourism performativity in mind.

This is not to deny local ideas their place in tourism. Local history can be transmitted as an interesting narrative. The end result, however, could also be the same as trying to illustrate the real and violent horror of gaol history in colonial convict Australia, an experience that highlights the difficulty of matching serious history with the lighter demands of tourism. For in describing a contemporary tourist venue, Richmond Gaol and the Penitentiary Chapel in Hobart, Tasmania, Staples (1995, p. 37) says without apparent irony:

Instead, the scenic ruin is used to playfully conjure up the horrors of the past. Secure in the present, the guide describes the floggings, the murders and the hangings. Most Gothic of all is the Ghost Tour. These are big business ... [and] are a howling success. Ironically, they sell nothing. From the outset, the guide makes it clear that this is not a scholarly or even logical exercise, and that the ghost is unlikely to appear. For the audience, it is even something of a

relief when it does not. The scenic ruin and the ghost tour are the positive spin on the derelict building and the sordid past.

Oversimplification of complex issues could risk reducing them to banal stereotypes.

3.1.4 Brochures and the internet

By far the most common way of promoting food and wine trail usage in Australia appears to be the brochure; often a small, colourful, advertising handout that provides much of the significant material about the businesses on the trail (Blessed Cheese 2005; Moira Tourism 2006; Tourism Noosa 2005). A typical brochure seems to include, at the very least, information on the name of the trail, associated businesses and what they do, relevant addresses, and the hours and dates the businesses are open (see Appendix Five). A map seems to be important too, although it may not be present; the visitors then being left to their own navigational skills and the presence of whatever signs exist to help them find their way. Other options would seem to include a phone number, website address and email contact. Australian brochures or guides of this nature appear consistent with overseas experience. Reporting on Scottish experience of local food and tourism, Boyne, William and Hall (2001, p. 3) indicate that:

Many areas are developing 'food trails' or 'taste trails' that centre upon guidebooks or leaflets which day visitors and tourists (and local residents) can use to plan their leisure activities. Typically, these guidebooks contain information relating to the location, opening times and nature of the local food producers, retailers, caterers and accommodation providers. The businesses are usually included on the basis of their quality of service and either their food production capacity or their commitment to preparing and selling high-quality local food and beverage products.

The effectiveness of such publications is usually only as good as their quality and distribution a point emphasised by Ballantyne et al. (2006b).

Little research was apparent on the design of trail brochures as such, the principal exception being work undertaken on heritage trails in Britain (Hayes & MacLeod 2007) introduced earlier (see section 2.3.7.1). These researchers, in the process of considering the connection between the experience economy and heritage trails, undertook a content analysis of 75 trail brochures. In reviewing their findings the researchers recommended caution should be exercised in the following matters: the length and density of text, use of didactic language, employment of technical terms and the presence of third person narratives.

The researchers intimate that long brochures that require prior reading were off-putting to trail participants. Certainly they were of the opinion that wording that suggested any prior

knowledge was unsuitable as visitors could be quite unfamiliar with the territory. Jargon was also proscribed. On the other hand, there was some evidence that emotive, evocative, active language was used on but few occasions. Yet when it was, it was effective. The investigators were also impressed with the power of first-person rather than third-person narrative.

Other comments made by Hayes and MacLeod (2007, p. 11) related to brochure maps, an important component of any brochure design.

Those brochures that featured hand drawn maps, illustrations and copy prepared by enthusiastic amateurs such as school children and members of the civic or historic societies have a certain folksy quality which is in stark contrast to the highly glossy and professional style adopted by some providers.

The use of mud maps, simple cover drawings neither to scale nor detail, has also been recommended for tourism in Australia. 'Tracing routes on regional maps or drawing mud maps is also helpful' (Ballantyne, Roy et al. undated, p. 7). But Hayes and Macleod (2007) caution about inconsistency between brochure and reality, for 'trail developers should consider the propensity for a mismatch between expectations created with literature and the reality of the experience on the ground' (p. 11).

Boyne and Hall (2004), in an informative article on the intersect between the world-wide-web (WWW) and place and tourism branding, are not quite so sanguine about the use of the new information technology. Certainly the Kangaroo Island Food and Wine Trail website (Good Food Kangaroo Island 2005) referred to previously (see section 3.1) would seem attractive, informative and relatively user-friendly. The real difficulty for publishers and users of websites, however, is not so much with their content as in the problem of access.

Fundamentally, then the difficulty for the potential visitor is that, in the light of the vast array of websites to chose from, and in the absence of local geographical knowledge, individuals might find it difficult to source what they seek. Even where links to or information on taste trail-type initiatives exist ... these can be difficult to locate (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002, p. 96).

Nevertheless, there has been a substantial increase in the number of young to middle-aged Australians prepared to shop and seek information on-line (Madden & Savage 2000). This take-up and use of technology is likely to increase rather than diminish. Boyne et al. (2002) identify two factors in addition (to the ones identified above) that they believe work against the effective use of web-based promotion. First, the rapid expansion of agencies in the food and wine tourism area makes cooperation and coordination difficult. Websites of all sorts proliferate. Second, the design of websites, in particular the positioning of hyperlinks that can draw the user rapidly to them, needs to be improved.

3.1.5 Food, Wine and Marketing

The placefulness of food offers rich potential for tourism through the capacity for place promotion through various media (Hall, C.M. et al. 2002, p. 79)

Given the potential for tourism implicit within this quotation it is illustrative that the authors also note that food, tourism and identity—regional, personal or national—have not received the academic attention that seems warranted. This is a point that again validates the need for this research. Frochot (2003) comments on this situation proposing that, in France at least, food, wine and tourism subjects are problematic to research and evaluate. She suggests this is the result of several factors which will now be discussed.

First, many visitor surveys do not allow people to indicate the extent and importance of food and wine to the tourist experience. The necessity of eating and drinking, its functional aspect, is not always set off against the pleasure dimension. Survey instruments do not always allow tourists to compare the food they eat to sustain themselves against the food they consume purposefully for interest as well as enjoyment—special local cuisines, for instance.

Another difficulty is that while food and drink may well be an important issue for travellers, they usually cannot eat and drink all day. Of necessity, other activities intervene with the potential to cloud research. Frochot (2003) notes that even in France, a country fêted for its *haute cuisine*, tourists prioritise heritage visitation, beach activities and socialising before eating and drinking. As it is put elsewhere, ‘food is the theme of additional tourist activities in regions and enterprises whose core products are something else’ (Hjalager & Corigliano 2000, p. 282). Food and wine represent a strong unifying theme for a tourism product but are probably not the most significant element.

Nonetheless, Frochot (p. 80) sees food as, ‘... an important source of satisfaction for visitors’. Food and drink are frequently ranked highly in visitor surveys. The final difficulty related by Frochot (2003) is that food and drink are so multi-factored, so significant and complex on a number of levels—identity, culture, production, consumption and more recently, sustainability, hygiene and genetic modification. This makes determination of particular tourist motives very difficult.

Food can, at once and separately, have at least four symbolic meanings beyond the merely nutritious. It can indicate cultural acceptance. A food has to be accepted by a culture to be expressed. Mongolians like mares’ milk (Civitello 2004), a custom barely accepted in any other cultures. Frochot quotes Pierre Bourdieu as writing that, ‘men [sic] do not eat what they

like, they eat what they are used to' (Bourdieu in Frochot 2003, p. 89). Moreover, food can be iconic, it can represent a culture in much the way that cassoulet represents Castelnaudary in France and so helps forge an identity. In so doing, 'food is ... intimately tied up with the production and consumption of the cultural meaning of place and space' (Hall, CM & Mitchell 2000a, p. 35).

Food is also seen as a class indicator. Such distinctions, based as they commonly were on the high cost and limited availability of certain foodstuffs, appear less pertinent now when class is no longer a simple analysis of relationship to the means of production (Sloan 2004). What is more, wealth no longer seems an adequate determinant of distinction when champagne is routinely sprayed on crowds at sporting events, caviar is available in supermarkets and prestige automobiles are advertised freely on television. Food knowledge, food awareness, being seen at the 'right' restaurants, purchasing distinct and different foodstuffs, are probably more emblematic than the actual cost of food. As Bell (2002) points out, these days the, 'hidden injuries of class are played out in the turf wars over taste, on home improvement shows and cookery pages, where symbolic violence comes on a plate or the table it sits on; the name we give it: *connoisseurship*' (emphases in original 2002, p. 14).

Finally Frochot (2003) notes that food is communication. Through commensality, in sharing food with local people, indulging in their means to an identity the tourist segues from onlooker to 'local', from sightseer to citizen. It helps the tourist understand and become more at one with the home group.

Most of the relevant motivations ceded to tourists can be seen in the consumption of food.

Indeed, food tourism can also be conceptualized as allowing tourists to achieve relaxation (relaxing in a restaurant or at the terrace of a café), excitement (trying new food, new ways of eating), escapism (changing from the usual food/everyday life), status (trying some expensive or different food), education (increasing one's knowledge about different types of food and wine and how to cook them), lifestyle (the simple fact to be outside in nice weather and enjoying nice wine and food). In other words, most of the colours of the tourist motivational palette can be achieved through the consumption of food (Frochot 2003, p. 82).

It is surprising, therefore, that given Frochot's extensive reasons for food, tourism and identity, the troika as Hall and Mitchell (2000a) refer to it, has not been more fully explored.

Frochot's analysis, however, is derived from tourism studies and, as Quan and Wang (2004) point out, food in tourism can also be looked at from a marketing standpoint. Boyne et al. (2003) endorse this but propose that espousing a marketing approach to food and tourism is

also problematic for two principal reasons. The first is that little is known about consumer behaviour with regard to food in tourism. This point was made in the previous section. One way to interpret this information is to say that there have been few studies of tourist attitudes to food as opposed to their counterparts, the wine tourists, who are relatively extensively covered in the literature (see, for instance, Carlsen & Charters 2006; O'Mahony et al. 2006). What studies there have been tend to be demographic and segment tourists into groups on the characteristics found. Moreover, Frochot (2003) has speculated on the problems related to food marketing and national statistics (see previous section).

Secondly, uncertainty surrounds the ways in which consumers understand contemporary food production. The author of this thesis has discussed consumer attitudes to animal slaughter with meat sellers at farmers' markets in Melbourne, Australia. They indicate that some customers are really unwilling to consider that a lamb chop was once a live animal. Similar delicate responses were drawn from attendees at a cinema where the journalist noted that, 'it was the sight of red, raw meat drying by the campfire that provoked an even louder squeamish response and widespread reaction' (La'broody 2006, p. 13). While not all foodstuff is flesh it is the uncertainties associated with customer attitudes that appear representative of approaches to food overall.

Boyne et al. (2003) suggest that there is a union of interest between food production and tourism initiatives in theory. A real convergence of approach remains to be implemented practically, however. They are of the opinion that this can, in part, be attributed to the fact that food in tourism is at an early point in its evolutionary marketing life-cycle. Yet they believe there is also a problem of misapprehension and misunderstanding among the various agencies involved in the promotion of such activities. This is made all the more difficult by the fact that many food and wine producers are indeed small players, the coordination of whom can be quite difficult (Frochot 2003).

This is undeniably hard for food and wine trails essentially composed of small primary producers in rural or semi-rural areas. Promoting a diversity of products to a tourist mass, the motivation and make-up of which is uncertain, is bound to be difficult. Nevertheless, as the British National Farmers' Union (cited in Ritson & Kuznesof 1996, p. 99), suggest:

The future of the rural economy, rural society and rural landscape depends upon a viable farming community. The future of the farming community depends upon success in marketing.

Marketing is a concept that carries significant weight in the modern economy. There are numerous classes, courses and university and corporate departments dedicated to comprehending and implementing the dictates of marketing. Consequently, there will be many different understandings of the term (Lusch 2007). However, it is largely assumed to mean the prioritisation of customer needs and wants as central to an organisation's operation. This then flows into the organisation of activities and techniques dedicated to achieving the marketing goals set.

The marketing conundrum for a food and wine trail appears to be the capture of the marketing focus (Mason, Deery & O'Mahony 2008). Just what is it that is going to be marketed—the food, the wine, the trail, or all three? And, if so, how? Initially it would appear important to make a distinction between marketing food and/or wine and marketing tourism. A food and wine trail is essentially a tourist phenomenon; an example of a gastronomic tourist initiative is the way Boyne et al. (2002) describe the Isle of Arran Taste Trail. On the other hand, many small businesses seem to participate in food and wine trails in order to promote sales of goods and services (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003), not tourism.

Assuming the notion that marketing is indeed a recognition of the needs and wants of customers then it follows that there may well be significant differences between the expectations held of a trail experience by potential food tourists, wine tourists and tourists in general (see section 2.2.7). Moreover, there may well be just food purchasers and/or wine purchasers on a trail as well. Frochot (2003) identifies a difficulty in coordinating the range of micro-businesses in the food and wine industry. The situation is further complicated on a food and wine trail in that the businesses involved usually have functions other than those involved in the trail operation, often using the same premises (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Brunori & Rossi 2000). The next person into an orchard shop could be a local who needs a few kilos of apricots for jam, or it could be a visitor really interested in learning more about the history of stone fruits in the area.

This manifest inconsistency may have repercussions for what trail businesses provide by way of marketing activities and techniques. This will ultimately be determined by how they see their purpose—sellers of wine and food or providers of tourist experience, or both (Beames 2003). The potential confusion of marketing focus can, in part, help clarify things as diverse as why Ignatov (2003; 2006) was able to find a different client range when she researched

culinary tourists in Canada (see Section 2.2.7), why some people attracted to wineries appear not to be overly interested in wine (Charters, Steve & Ali-Knight 2002), and why Beames (2003) can say that wine-makers appear to be very product-focused and not really tourist-oriented.

There appear to be a number of separate options for marketing food and wine trails that would realistically be blurred in practice. First, it could be the food and wine trail as region—the characteristics and culture of the region itself within which the food and wine act as a support. Another method would be to see a trail as representative of the food and wine of the area—typicity, specialties, local cuisine, agricultural history and the like. Other than that, there is the region as represented in the food and wine—agrarian merits of freshness, quality, cleanliness, appeals to the nostalgic charms of reminiscence and comfort. Certainly, food and wine as lifestyle could be relevant with references to pleasure, leisure, temptation, relaxation and taste or style. Finally, the food and wine producers could market as individual outlets—in which case the trail is more or less a device to draw tourists to the activity itself.

It seems timely to revisit Brunori and Rossi's (2000, pp. 410-1) article in which they comment that;

Many of the reasons why tourists buy products and service on the farms located along a wine [and food] route has nothing to do with the will or ability of the individual farmer. The event of buying depends on the decision to visit a ... route. It is only when a tourist has chosen to visit such a route that competition between farms begins to play a role.

The emphasis here is on the power of marketing of the route *per se*. Brunori and Rossi (2000) intimate that the first two points outlined above are the principal marketing aims of food and wine trails. It is the area, its history, geography and cultural relationship to food and wine, which are being marketed more than anything.

Compare this with promotional material for the Yarra Valley Regional Food Trail (undated), which emphasises points 3. and 4. above through the provision of;

jams and chutneys like grandmother used to make ... old fashioned lemon cordial, lavender honey and mustards along with bottled natural spring water, trout products and the 'simply sinful' Yarra Valley Icecream are just some of the temptations.

It needs to be acknowledged that any of these approaches is essentially setting rural area against rural area.

3.1.5.1 Branding

In discussing the nature of branding, an essential element of marketing, McEnally and de Chernotany (1999), reinforce the point that brands evolve. The evolution progresses from unbranded through to branding as reference, personality, icon and company and, finally, to branding as policy. Essentially the progression is motivated primarily from the need to differentiate among numerous products and services. But, as McEnally and de Chernotany (1999, p. 1) say, ‘... differentiation among brands on rational/functional attributes becomes exceedingly difficult as many producers make the same claim’.

This would seem, to a large extent, to be the difficulty facing food and wine regions in Australia. In a country where regional/local cuisines are not well defined (Sheringham 1999) it is difficult to differentiate one area growing food and producing wine from another. They all appear to make similar claims—not dissimilar to those made in the last paragraph of the previous section. Yet, as has been pointed out previously (section 2.3.1), the competition between regions is fierce and likely to get even more combative (Lagendijk, Arnoud 2001; Lang, WL 2001). From this position has come the need to brand regions, to have them differentiated from each other on the basis of characteristics real or imagined so that tourists can be attracted. This refers back to the material previously discussed on neo-endogenous development and the cultural economy (Ray 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001), and the ways in which regions can construct themselves (Cai 2002, p. 721). Regions and food and wine trails are not necessarily coterminous and the greater relevance of territorial understanding has been postulated. Still, as the decision to visit a region is likely to be prior to the decision to visit a trail, destination attractiveness is important to trail businesses as well.

The challenge of branding destinations lies with the complexity of the decision process on the part of tourists. As a bundle of goods and services, purchase of a destination mix has an inherent uncertainty and is usually expensive. Further, unlike other tangible products, tourists are not able to test drive and try the destinations before making a choice (2002, p. 722).

Yet if, ‘a brand element comes in the form of a name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package, or a combination of these, of which the name is the foremost reference’ (Hall, CM & Mitchell 2000a, p. 34), then the notion of branding as evidenced by the mechanisms previously outlined is relevant and apt.

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3.2 Management and clusters

This section will consider the importance of clusters as a management concept and further develop the ideas related to social capital and networks (section 2.3.6). It was important to include a review of the literature on clusters because food and wine trails are essentially small enterprise clusters, gatherings of often micro-businesses for the purpose of promoting food and/or wine and tourism (Faithorn 2003; Knowd 2003a). Trails also appear quite dependent on the work of certain people to use their interpersonal connectedness, ie. social capital, in the pursuit of cooperative ends (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

Trails are small enterprise clusters. That much is clear, but it is also confusing. For clusters and clustering are concepts that have taken on added business significance in the last 20 years or so, moving beyond the notion of simple aggregation that the word implies to generate a particular cachet of their own (Porter 1990). The principal motivation for this appears to be changes to the conditions of industry wrought largely by the impact of globalisation. This has encouraged serious reconsideration of what makes businesses successful and profitable; and clusters have been identified as part of the process of gaining competitive advantage (Porter 1990).

Braun and Hollick (2006) identify three cluster forms that may encourage competitive advantage. The first is companies in the same industry sharing an industrial or technological base, operating in a common market and using a common purchasing or distribution channel. The second form is a vertical cluster involving many supply chain members. Finally, there

are diagonal clusters. This refers to complementary or dependent activities whereby each form adds to the other creating a value chain.

Food and wine trails appear most comparable to the third form identified. They are complementary businesses each adding to the other and literally to create a value chain (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Martin & McBoyle 2006). A more appropriate analogy might possibly be a value rose, where independent petals make up an attractive whole. The key distinction, however, is that a food and wine trail is a tourism creation in its own right, each separate business adding value to the others in the creation of a tourist experience.

A key to trails seems to be that small businesses (sometimes not initially tourism related in any way) gather together to present an aggregated tourist destination. While each of the businesses exists separately the conjunction of businesses provides not only the opportunity to aid and abet each other but also provide a unique tourism product—a tourist trail (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003). The whole appears definitely greater than the sum of the parts. As Meyer (2004, p. 8) suggests:

The essence of routes is that the route itself is an important element of the product. The route can function as a regional definition, a theme that transcends geographical diversity and distance to provide a spatially exclusive but integrated, marketable theme.

The purpose of a food and wine trail can be then, as Frochot (2000) also suggests, the provision of a unifying theme for marketing food, wine and tourism. The benefits to small businesses in entering tourism through a trail are principally twofold. First, there is the lowering of costs involved in establishment and promotion through economies of scale. Second, tourist expenditures can be dispersed over a greater number of businesses.

Braun et al. (2005, p. 4) also suggest that small to medium enterprises are, ‘... limited in their access to specialised resources and intelligent capital’. Through networking with other small agencies they are able to access specialised help and knowledge to aid in innovation and competition. Other advantages include that, ‘tourism operators at the destination share public infrastructures and attractions; cooperatively manage their resources; and innovate while reducing the threat of negative externalities’ (Braun & Hollick 2006, p. 479). To the extent that trails benefit from the general attractions of the local area this is valid. It certainly would appear valid where regional authorities promote food, wine and tourism together.

Braun and Hollick (2005) have suggested that tourism operators ‘share’, ‘cooperate’, ‘manage’ and ‘innovate’ without quite nominating how this is done. For food and wine trails

it would appear to be done principally through a network, a concept said by some (Castells 1996) to be the new social morphology of the era. Their utility is described as follows:

Firms operating in a context of high uncertainty with respect to competitive and environmental trends manage turbulence through the establishment of network linkages encompassing information exchanges, trust-building communication channels, quasi-integration, and joint planning (Tremblay 1998, p. 849).

Chapter Two of the Literature Review, in particular section 2.2.1, was devoted largely to establishing the idea that rural life and provincial economies were indeed uncertain and trails could be seen as networks that help mediate uncertainty in some way.

Networks can be seen as sets of formal and informal social relationships that shape collaborative action between government, the private sector and civil society (Dredge 2006). For the most part, the operation and management of a food and wine trail can be considered a network based upon the elements described in the foregoing quotations—and it will be so construed here. The early twenty first century is an uncertain time for business, particularly rural business (see Chapter Two). Food and wine trails offer a competitive advantage but rather than establish formal and legal linkages, most food and wine trails are networked, that is they exchange information, plan, develop and maintain their activity through essentially informal connectivity (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

Braun et al. (2005), following Rosenfeld, suggest that there are significant differences between a network and a cluster but in the end they are interdependent concepts. A cluster is a means by which regional enterprises, at times cooperative and competitive, can both generate demand for each other's businesses and attract needed specialised services to an area. A cluster is based on networks for, 'typically, firms and individual actors are embedded in a variety of formal and informal professional, social and intellectual exchange networks' (2005, p. 5). The cluster concept is maximised by networking.

Brunori and Rossi (2000) avoid the need to make a distinction between clusters and networks by using the term *collective action* to describe the formation of a food and wine trail. Such a term seems useful because it describes the communal nature of the process, the sense of joint action, without getting caught in the necessity for a definition. What makes all such concepts work in practice, however, what appears to unify networking, clustering and collective action is the idea and practice of social capital. This is a concept introduced and developed previously (see section 2.3.6) but which will be elaborated upon here.

3.2.1 Social capital and networks

Social capital has been introduced previously (see section 2.3.6). It is generally understood as the goodwill engendered through social interaction and can be used to facilitate action (Adler & Kwon 2002, p. 17). Social capital has a twofold capacity: on the one hand, to bridge, to reach out and contact others external to the initial group or individual. On the other hand, bonding, the skill of empathising and understanding within networks, is also a critical part of social capital.

Food and wine trails in Australia often appear to have their genesis and continuity in the concept of social capital. This would certainly appear to be a factor critical to their performance. For example, the author (Mason 2003), suggested that a woman orchardist used personal knowledge of her locality, its citizens and businesses to bring together the Twin Rivers Farm-Food and Wine Trail in Gippsland. Certainly the business participants in the trail acknowledged her instrumentality in initiating the trail and conceded her continuing importance to keeping it operating. In a report Nexus and Urban (2003) quoted trail business operators as saying of the coordinator's role; "Without [her], it wouldn't go" and "[She] is the key driver" (2003, p. 11). This acknowledges both the coordinator's key role in the trail's but also her continued use of social capital in its continuation. This can be contrasted with the observation that, 'the limited Australian cluster literature concurs that small firms do not have a natural propensity towards collaboration' (Braun, McRae-Williams & Lowe 2005, p. 7). And this is particularly so of tourism. International experience can also be contrary but evidence does support the strength and value of social capital (Brunori & Rossi 2000).

In discussing how agro-food businesses in Europe diversified their operations to include, 'such activities [as] ... agri-tourism, landscape preservation and high quality production', Clark (2005, p. 479) proposed that networking incorporates three aspects. First agricultural businesses need to work with regulatory agencies such as local government and state and federal instrumentalities that can and do impose constraints on their activities. Such interactions are often highly circumscribed such as they would be in the case of health or traffic regulations, for example. Secondly, operators need to, '... articulate their agro-food diversification goals to business partners and consumers' (2005, p. 480). The capacity to commence a food and wine trail will be dependent on one or more actors discussing their plans with others and having such others agree to participate. These relationships are more horizontal than vertical in connection and power. Finally, Clark notes the necessity to

incorporate natural phenomena and processes in such networking in order to maximise economies of scope (see section 2.2.5.1). Macnaghten and Urry (2000, p. 1) underline the importance of these by suggesting that:

These practices reflect the apparently enhanced ‘culture of nature’ in many contemporary societies: a culture that emphasizes valuing the natural, purchasing natural products, employing images of nature in marketing, supporting organizations concerned with conserving nature, being in the natural environment and engaging in practices that enhance the ‘naturalness of one’s body’.

In a review of Australian local tourism associations, Dredge (2006) suggests that for networks to be successful they have to resolve leadership issues particularly among the various private and governmental agencies that can be involved. They also need to ensure maximum involvement among all members, outline members’ roles clearly, and establish rules of conduct to enable all participants to be heard.

Incorporating such aspects, according to Clark (2005) makes it possible to understand how businesses work with other agencies to initiate alternative agro-food enterprises. Clark sees the key to be in the negotiation and renegotiation of knowledge and power among business people whose values and mindsets might well be different. Through this continual dialogue new projects can be generated (Clark 2005).

Clark goes on to note that associationalism such as this empowers new networks and new opportunities, possibilities that really did not exist under older, more traditional models of commodity production. Such networking, however, requires investments of energy, time and capital, requirements that are not always easy to marshal when such work is coupled with normal commodity production. Marsden (2004, p. 135) suggests,

... such interfaces are vulnerable to internal and externally generated disruptions. There is no inevitability that strong and mutually reinforcing associational interfaces will be reproduced over time. Furthermore, where they do not exist or where they have broken down, it may take many years to build relationships to a point where regional or local actors—or actors acting at a distance across a supply chain—can create the conditions necessary to effectively and efficiently meet and relate to consumer demands .

Hence the probable origins of the discord noted previously in the Italian wine trail (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002), the demise of the Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail in Canada (Plummer, Telfer & Hashimoto 2006) and the possible unwillingness of many Australian primary producers to engage in tourism activities (Beames 2003).

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3.3 Personnel

This final section of the literature review briefly deals with human resources. There is little doubt that the availability and talent of staff are critical to the survival of businesses. Legge (2005), after enumerating changed business circumstances similar to those outlined previously (see section 2.2.1), speaks of the, ‘... importance of human resources to competitive advantage’ (2005, p. 221). Without competent staff it is difficult to imagine business success.

This section will focus on two human resource aspects which seem most relevant to the work of food and wine trails based mainly in rural and semi-rural areas. They are the availability of personnel in rural areas, and the skills needed for work in tourism

Australia rural employment moved from a position of little or no job availability in the 1990s (Dawson 1994) to a situation where a Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) report claimed that, ‘the rural sector is desperately scrambling for workers as unemployment levels fall to their lowest levels ever’ (Broad 2008). Now, the global financial crisis precipitated by the sub-prime loan collapse of 2008 (Shiller 2008), has meant a reverse of the previous positive position and a deterioration in employment prospects throughout Australia (AAP 2009). The reasons usually given for such employment fluctuations relate to the success or otherwise of commodity extraction such as iron ore and coal. As a recent Australian Government report suggested, ‘skill shortages are most common at times of high economic growth and low unemployment’ (BTRE 2006, p. ix). The resource boom of the early twenty first century drew people to where jobs were available and they were often concentrated in particular rural areas. Other rural areas lost out; a position exacerbated by the changes to the rural economy outlined previously (see section 2.2.1) (Pritchard & McManus 2000; Vanclay

2003). The inconsistencies in the sectoral and geographic spread of economic performance in Australia, due mainly to the location of resources, have resulted in significantly different labour market outcomes across the nation (O'Brien et al. 2007). The economic fluctuations have usually meant greater urban employment as well although the recent downturn puts both rural and urban jobs at risk (McLennan 2009). The uncertainty has further encouraged available workers to depart rural areas for cities and regions where more jobs were believed to be available. This has left many country towns and their hinterlands further bereft of labour. The availability of staffing in country areas, and hence the staff available for trails, appears problematic.

The changes to the food and wine industries outlined in Chapter Two have meant that small businesses involved in these areas are looking for new ways and means to increase revenue. A premium is thus placed on staff performance in order to achieve these ends (Thach & Olsen 2003). Certainly personnel selection plays a part in that people with the right skills and attitudes need to be chosen, but training would appear important also. This then raises the question of the nature of the skills and attitudes required and how they can be obtained. The tourist boom of the late twentieth century (Craik 2001) certainly encouraged the growth of training programs for the industry at all levels and in many skill areas (see, for example, TTA 2008).

A recent NSW report indicated that high training priorities among accommodation venues, visitor information centres and wineries included computer skills, product knowledge, selling and promotion skills, customer service, occupational health and safety, marketing and managing skills (Gussoni 2007). The report cautions that it is more oriented towards accommodation venues. A Queensland training initiative (QTIC 2006) reported that the following skills were necessary for working in wine tourism; quality customer service, cellar door sales, sales and marketing, tour guiding, promoting local knowledge, providing information on wine and wineries, providing and promoting local foods and produce, food and beverage service, viticulture, evaluating wines, organising wine tasting and promotions, organising events and tours, office skills, administration and e-business, stock control and financial skills. It would take little addition and amendment to orient this skills and knowledge set towards horticulture and food as well. Trails have the potential to contain dual roles of marketing and tourism (see section 3.1.5) and whatever skills and attitudes were seen as necessary it would seem important to incorporate them from both elements.

3.4 Performance— a summary of critical factors to date

To this point the literature review has assessed published studies and papers in a variety of fields in order to garner factors that might possibly be critical for the development and performance of food and wine trails. These studies were considered under three headings:

1. External factors,
11. Local conditions,
111. Internal subsystems; the management, personnel and technology of trails.

Chapter Two dealt with external and local factors as they might impinge upon the development of food and wine trails.

This chapter, Three, reviewed literature that could be relevant to the performance of food and wine trails. They were categorised into technologies, the physical and social methodologies through which trails appear to achieve their aims (section 3.1). The next section (3.2) appraised the management of trails, how clusters, networking and social capital might impact. Section 3.3 looked at personnel matters.

The inferences to be drawn from the foregoing are that the following factors could have relevance:

- Promotion, and the importance of themes, marketing and branding within food and wine tourism,
- The impact of roads, parking and signage on tourism behaviours and the relevance of routes as a concept,
- Brochures, the role of the internet and their effects upon tourism,
- The implications of management clusters, networking and social capital to the way trails operate,
- The import of personnel selection and training upon performance.

The next chapter (Chapter Four) on research brings these observations together and constructs the research process by which these factors will be assessed by the principal research stakeholders.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

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4.6 Research purpose
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4.8 Data collection
4.9 Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research is to answer the question; what are the factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails in Australia? This chapter describes the design and implementation of the research. An initial synopsis is as follows: the research involved data collection and comparison among three groups: first, trail businesses; second, tourist-consumers as they experienced trails and, finally, ancillary agents including tourist officials and food and wine ‘champions’. It took place within three trails in south-eastern Australia. The process was an interactive and incremental activity that collected and analysed information from one source and used it as a basis to generate the collection of further data as unforeseen possibilities, or challenges that needed to be addressed, emerged.

The overall orientation of the research was guided by the contents of the Literature Review (chapters Two and Three) as are the characteristics of trails which are restated below in section 4.3. The characteristics of the research subjects, the nature of the data gathered from them and the methodology through which this was accomplished will be elaborated upon throughout this chapter. The findings and analysis are then detailed in Chapter Five.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The next section (4.2) identifies the potential performance and development factors ascertained through the review of literature. The main sources from which they were derived are also acknowledged. This provides the focus for the data collection as these are the factors at the heart of the research. It then provides context for the trails themselves (section 4.3) and enables the introduction of the principal

actors, the main groups from whom the data was gathered (section 4.4). Diagrams are provided to help explain the process. The next section (4.5) presents the particular trails selected for the research and offers a rationale for that selection. The research purpose is then re-stated (section 4.6). Then, based upon the trail characteristics, the actors and their contexts, the nature of the data to be collected, the trails chosen and the purpose of the research, the research framework is described (section 4.7). The chapter concludes with a description of the overall data collection process (section 4.8).

4.2 Potential factors

As suggested (see Introduction), there has been little study of food and wine trails in Australia. Consequently, they are a relatively academically unexplored aspect of tourism. The comprehensive review of literature established that food and wine trails are essentially aggregates of small businesses cooperating for mutual benefit (Boynr, 2002; Brunori, 2000; Nexus, 2003). The principal benefit of such cooperation is the improvement of business outcomes and the enhancement of revenue through participation in a gastronomic tourist route (Knowd, 2006). There are apparently more personal motivations for participants but they will not be considered here (see Getz, 2000). The intent of this research is to understand the factors related to the development and performance of food and wine trails rather than personal motivation.

As indicated in the previous paragraph, the concept of food and wine trails was developed through the review of literature as a collection of usually small businesses cooperating to present a tourist enterprise within a rural area. The key elements of such a concept are thus, food and wine, small business, tourism and rural matters. The particular factors noted below were selected largely because of their relevance to one or more of these elements. For example, the literature review suggests that alternative food networks (see Table 4.1) are important to food and wine marketing, small businesses and rural areas. It was considered important to investigate such phenomena with regard to their affect upon trail development. The factors developed through the Literature Review and presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 were first formed into a series of themes in order to test their relevance with trail business operators. The straight exposition and utilisation of ideas as expressed in the Literature Review needed to be modified in order to make the content understandable to the respondent. This method also helped ascertain that the questions used in the interview

process were understandable to the subjects. For, ‘... a question must be understood by the respondent in the way the researcher intended, and the answer must be understood by the researcher in the way the respondent intended’ (Foddy, 1993; p.23). This was a significant component of this phase of the research.

From the eleven development and five performance factors established in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, and derived from the review of literature, the following themes emerged.

- Changing rural conditions and economic relevance of trails
- The relevance of alternative food networks
- Who is the tourist and what do they want?
- The trail: is it a product, a service or an experience
- Regionalism, identity and theme
- Importance of government
- Cooperation with other agencies
- Roads and signs
- Promotion and advertising
- Coordination
- Staffing

Early advocates of qualitative research proscribed the use of literature reviews prior to interview believing that such information had the potential to skew the data collection (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). More recent opinion suggests that while it is necessary to remain open to the potential for innovation and change it is important to begin with some initial ideas (Esterberg, 2002). This necessitated the development of a set of themes and open-ended questions for use with the owners/managers and staff of trail businesses.

The themes (above) were converted into a preliminary question format and subjected to pilot testing on a three business principals from the Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail in East Gippsland, Victoria. This was done in order to test the strength of the factors developed in the literature review. The East Gippsland trail and its component businesses had been the subject of preliminary graduate research by the candidate

The potential factors, thus assessed and tested, are presented in two tables that follow. Table 4.1 encompasses eleven factors with the potential to influence development. Table 4.2 summarises five areas with the ability to affect performance. The tables are constructed with the potential factors outlined in the middle column, supported by indicative source material on the right. The numbers in the left columns approximate the order in which these issues were introduced in the review of literature. They do not denote relative importance, however. The letters D and P in the first column stand for development or performance, a distinction that is drawn on in developing questions for respondents to this study (see Appendix One).

The content of Tables 4.1 and 4.2 were considered to be the potential themes for discussion with the research participants and thus became the basis of the research process.

	Potential trail development issues	Indicative documentation Source
D1	Changing rural circumstances	(Amin & Thrift 1997; Fagan 1997; Fonte 2008; Gray & Lawrence 2001; Holmes 2002, 2006; Tonts 2000; Vanclay 2003)
D2	Relevance of alternative food networks	(Andrée et al. 2007; Ilbery & Maye 2005; Ilbery et al. 2004; Murdoch 2000; Murdoch & Miele 2004a; Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003)
D3	Changes to tourism	(Nordin 2005; Poon 1994, 2003; Richards, G 2000)
D4	Development of culinary tourism	(Deneault 2002; Hall, CM et al. 2003; Hjalager & Richards 2002; Ignatov & Smith 2006; Long 2004a, 2004b; Wolf 2002)
D5	Impact of culture economy	(Legendijk, Arnoud 2001; Ray 1998, 2001)
D6	Relevance of regions, regionalism and regional cuisines	(Beer 2000; Beer, Maude & Pritchard 2003; Bell & Valentine 1997; Paasi 2003; Ray 1998, 2000, 2001; Santich 1996)
D7	Identity and theme	(Bell 2002; Bell & Valentine 1997; Urry 1990, 2000)
D8	Importance of trust and regard	(Hinrichs 2000; Sage 2003a, 2003b)
D9	Presence of narratives and stories	(Barber 2001; Hayes & MacLeod 2007; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Robertson 1994; Tellstrom, Gustafsson & Mossberg 2005; Turnbull 2007)
D10	Changes to government involvement	(Beer 2000; Beer et al. 2005; Beer & Maude 1996; Tonts & Haslam-McKenzie 2005)
D11	Cooperation with other agencies	(Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002; Boyne, Hall & Williams 2003; Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Brunori & Rossi 2000; Knowd 2003a)

Table 4.1: Potential development factors

	Potential trail performance issues	Indicative documentation source
P1	Promotion, marketing and branding	(Cai 2002; Frochot 2000, 2003; McEnally & de Chernatony 1999)
P2	Roads, parking, signage and routes	(Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004; Suvantola 2002)
P3	Brochures and the internet	(Ballantyne, R, Hughes & Moscardo 2006b; Boyne & Hall 2004; Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002; Hayes & MacLeod 2007)
P4	Management clusters, coordination, networking and social capital	(Braun & Hollick 2006; Braun, McRae-Williams & Lowe 2005; Brunori & Rossi 2000; Clark 2005; Putnam 1993)
P5	Personnel and training	(Craik 2001; Thach & Olsen 2003)

Table 4.2: Potential performance factors

4.3 Trail context

Each trail business has its own unique ownership, management style and business practices. It was understood, therefore, that trail business operators would respond to their individual circumstances in different ways. Together as a trail, however, the businesses also have a set of beliefs and practices that determine how the trail operates as a cooperative enterprise. It is the latter that are the main foci of this research. It was believed that by examining such beliefs and practices and by soliciting the opinions of business participants, the relevance and relative importance of the performance and development factors (outlined above) would be uncovered (Foddy 1993). There are other actors, however, principally tourist-consumers and ancillary agents involved with trails and their opinions are also vitally important.

For, like all businesses, food and wine trails operate within a broader context—and they have broader contacts. They are linked to other tourism operators and agencies—private and government (Tourism Victoria 2002b). As was outlined previously, tourism has taken on importance as a means to boost local economic performance (Fleischer & Felsenstein 2000) and assist regional development (Department of Industry Tourism and Resources 2003a). Therefore, local government authorities (Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003) as well as various state agencies (Tourism Australia 2005a) take an interest in tourism, and provide support at varying levels to the development of food and wine trails. The development of trails is also of interest to other local businesses such as accommodation venues whose incomes can be augmented by agritourism such as trails (Knowd 2003b). Nevertheless, trails are principally aimed at tourists for tourism means income, and food and

wine are contemporary tourism drawcards (Bell & Valentine 1997) that can generate revenue for businesses.

The creation of a food and wine trail is thus a tripartite interaction between the three groups just described; food and wine trail businesses, tourist-consumers and ancillary agencies. In order to depict these relationships a schema (Figure 4.1 below) was developed based upon the review of literature and the information presented herein. The principal relationships explored in this research are depicted by the unbroken arrowed lines; that is, between trail businesses and regional, state and other private agents and between trail tourist-consumers and trail businesses. Figure 4.1 summarises the context for food and wine trails and provides the underlying rationale for the research approach. It indicates the principal participants, and sketches out the potential nature of the relationships.

Figure 4.1 suggests that the nature of the relationship between Tourist-consumers and Trail Businesses is market driven in that producers want to generate income. Yet, the work on quality conventions previously outlined (see section 2.2.10) suggests there may be more to such relationships than commerce. Other relationships may well be embedded. Such connections need to be understood and were explored as part of this research. Moreover, while the relationship between trail businesses and tourist-consumers might superficially appear to be market driven it is not clear that a rubric such as ‘market relationships’ is adequate to describe what the tourist-consumer seeks from a trail experience. As a result this, too, became part of the research.

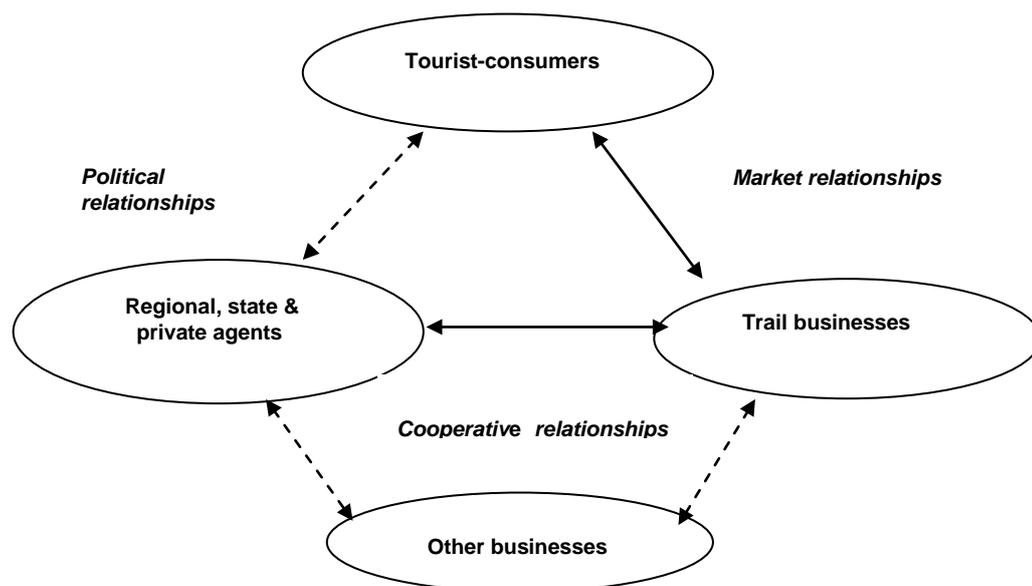


Figure 4.1: The relationships among food and wine trail components

The relationship between Tourist-consumers and State Agencies in Figure 4.1 is depicted as political. It implies that the way to change political structures and influence policy is through influencing the governance processes. Some of the main themes for such a potential discourse have been alluded to in the Literature Review (see section 1.2). This particular connection was not researched further as it seemed to have little or no direct bearing on the research question although an important issue in itself.

The relationships between Trail Businesses and Regional, State and Private Agencies (referred to herein as ancillary agents) is a concern of this research, however, and is elaborated upon. The relationships among Trail Businesses and between Trail Business and Other Businesses are also relevant. Trails are essentially collaborative ventures which have links of varying importance with other activities within their communities.

In summary, therefore, the stakeholders for this research include:

- i. Food and wine trail businesses,
- ii. Food and wine trail tourist-consumers,
- iii. Regional, state and private (ancillary) agencies.

The interaction between these groups provides for the development of food and wine trails. The data collected from each group also serves to triangulate the research (Minichiello et al. 1995). The diagram below (Figure 4.2) depicts these three principal groups and proposes relevant categories within them—distinctions that will be further developed in the following sub-sections and beyond.



Figure 4.2: The principal stakeholders of food and wine trails

These sub-sections also help develop understandings of the various groups as a lead-in to the data collection.

4.4 Trail stakeholders

4.4.1 Food and wine trail operators

The review of literature provided background to the context of food and wine trail operators participation in trails. Economic difficulties have prompted some primary producers to diversify in order to secure their incomes; involvement in agritourism through trails is one way of doing so. It would not seem to be the only way, however, a point elaborated upon in Chapter Five. Different businesses can be selling different products or services independently of each other yet be united by cooperation in a food, beverage and tourist attraction such as a trail (Brunori & Rossi 2000; Martin & McBoyle 2006). Thus, there can be multiple operators in quite different circumstances who find themselves collaborating in the presentation of a food and wine trail.

The attitudes and approaches of such people to this involvement, however, can be different. This has been reported to lead to complications mainly in relation to commitment and performance. Problems of this nature were observed by Plummer et al. (2006) while researching a beverage trail in Ontario, Canada. They found, ‘... that not all participants are equal partners; rather different groups have held different positions within collaborative arrangements. Different groups have different resources leading to differing levels of power to influence policy processes and promoting vested interests’ (p. 195). Such findings are also supported elsewhere (Martin & McBoyle 2006). Operators might share a common motivation to enhance revenue, but their attitudes towards tourism—their views of a trail’s purpose and utility, their need to participate in it and their willingness to commit to its operation, financially and personally—could well be quite different. It is in dynamic and fluid contexts such as this that trails are negotiated, affirmed and understood. As Plummer et al. (2006) attest, trails are products of complex sets of interrelationships between producers of product and service, tourist-consumers and other local and regional agencies. A trail is thus the result of spatially and dynamically complex interactions (Knowd 2003a).

4.4.2 Ancillary tourism operators/agencies

Tourism is seldom a one-off enterprise. Attractions are often part of something greater and a food and wine trail is direct evidence of that. Not only are there different businesses with interests in food and wine trails, local accommodation or hospitality outlet operators, for instance, there are also interested people outside the direct work of food and wine trails who

will have opinions about trail structure and function. Such external people can be those referred to as ‘champions’, local supporters and boosters of food and wine (Hyde 1998). In Australia, though, they often seem to be connected to tourism through state or local government in some way and see their priorities as identical with food, wine and tourism (ABC 2006; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003).

4.4.3 Food and wine trail tourist-consumers

The links between tourist-consumers and trail businesses are vitally important and are taken up in the research. It was evident throughout the two chapters of the Literature Review that such visitors can often be seen as synonymous with wine tourists. There has been little investigation into the characteristics and attitudes of visitors to food and wine trails in Australia. Certainly little is known about their attitudes towards trails as either providers of products and services—or as tourist attractions. The meanings that people ascribe to trails are unknown. Yet how they respond is critical. Trails are aimed at tourists and knowledge of such people’s identity, that is, who they are, what they want and the nature of their motivation would seem indispensable. There are some assumptions, nonetheless, about the identity of such visitors that would enable their opinions and attitudes to be assessed (Carlsen 2004; Carlsen & Dowling 1999; Charters, Steve & Ali-Knight 2002; Gatti & Maroni 2004; Ignatov & Smith 2006; O’Mahony et al. 2006; Sparks et al. 2005).

It is the attitudes and opinions of all stakeholders—trail businesses, tourist-consumers and other ancillary agents—that have the potential to generate meaning for food and wine trails. The research approach, therefore, concentrates on these three groups beginning with interviews with trail business operators, then developing an understanding of the tourist-consumer and, finally, checking these assumptions with other agencies such as tourism authorities and local businesses. However, having introduced the principal actors and outlined the context within which they work—and with which the research must treat—the discussion now turns to the reasons behind the choice of the particular trails used.

4.5 Choice of trails

The research required the selection of a number of food and wine trails in Australia. Location was a prime consideration. Food and wine trails are evident in most Australian states. The three main wine and food producing states, however, are New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. (See the chart in section 4.8.1 for general locations.) These states produced

over 95 per cent of beverage wine in 2006-7 (Winebiz 2008) with South Australia producing the most. They are also significant food producers as well. The other states of Australia are not as heavily engaged in food and wine production. Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland, in total, produce less than five per cent of wine in Australia. Moreover, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia are states that significantly highlight food and wine in their tourism plans (South Australian Tourist Commission 2007; Tourism Australia 2005a; Tourism NSW 2005). The foregoing thus made the choice of food and wine trails in these three states appropriate, timely and propitious. Food and wine trails are principally comprised of food producers, grape growers and wine makers (Faithorn 2003; Nexus Consulting & Urban Enterprise 2003). That makes them predominantly rural or peri-urban. There are urban trails but they are usually about particular shops or unusual elements of food and beverage production such as those described in a teapot trail in the UK (Hall, D & Boyne 2007). This thesis is concerned with the changing economic circumstances of rural food and wine producers so it does not take up the issue of urban trails at all. There are also exclusive food trails (Meyer-Czech 2003) and separate wine trails (South Australian Tourism Commission 2005) but they are uncommon. In addition, most trails incorporate other tourism and hospitality establishments such as bed and breakfast accommodation and cafes (Boyne, Williams & Hall 2002). These are sometimes incorporated into the food and wine businesses themselves. Given that there may well be differences among food and wine producers in their attitudes towards tourists and tourism, it was necessary to include representatives of both food and wine producers in the research. Vignerons operate in the field of agriculture but, as has been seen (see section 2.2.3), they are often operating under different market conditions than other primary producers. To obtain a diversity of opinion, then, it was not adequate to only cover trails, few as they are, that had an exclusive bias towards either food or wine. Instead trails that include both food and wine were selected.

The three food and wine trails chosen for this research were the:

Farm Gate Trail (FGT) in Victoria,
Poachers Trail (PT) in New South Wales,
Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail (BBB&WT) in South Australia.

The three trails are similar in that they are all food and wine trails, not just wine or food trails, and they are rural in location. This makes the three trails comparable and the rural nature of the trails means that they are more likely to be important to local and regional economic development.

Trail	State	Rural/peri-urban	Food and wine
Farm Gate Trail	Vic	Rural	Yes
Poachers Trail	NSW	Rural	Yes
Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail	SA	Rural/peri-urban	Yes

Table 4.3: Trail classification

The trails chosen in South Australia and Victoria were initially identified through their promotional activities; both trails have been operating for some time, have established positions and are known through their advertising in visitor information centres and other tourism facilities. The Barossa trail has been operating for over 20 years, whereas the Farm Gate Trail had been running for over three years at the time of the data collection. The Poachers Trail in New South Wales was identified by the tourism authority in that state after discussions with the principal food, wine and tourism officer. She also put forward the name of the Southern Highlands Trail, a trail which was used to conduct initial exploratory research to develop the context for the research and test the interview material. The Southern Highlands Wine and Food Trail is located some 100 kilometres south of Sydney. All trails are comprised of both food and wine outlets.

4.5.1 Farm Gate Trail

The Farm Gate Trail is an extended collection of 19 food, wine and horticulture businesses located within 50 kilometres of the Murray River in north-central Victoria. The trail is largely located between the rural, river cities of Yarrawonga and Echuca and north of Shepparton, a provincial city.

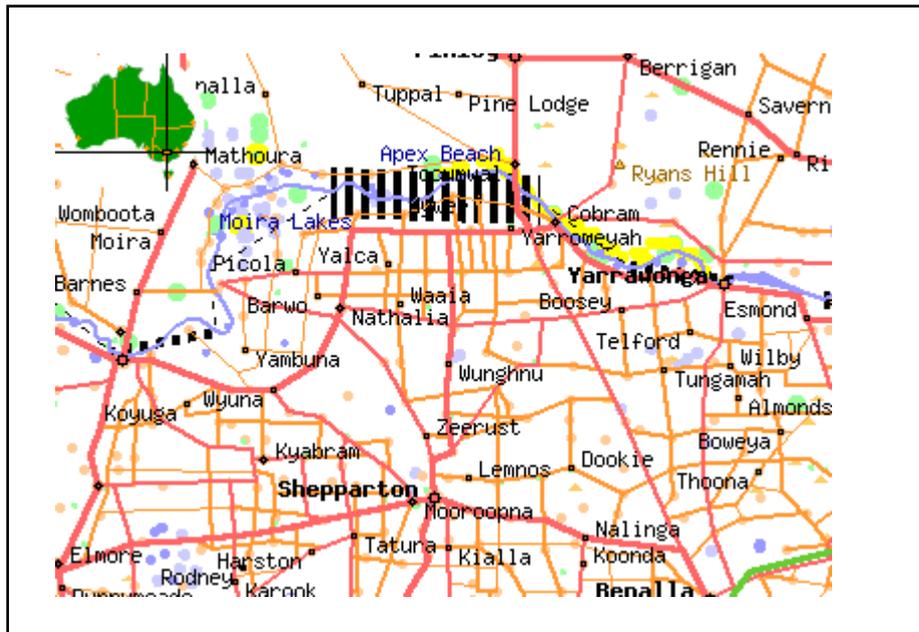


Chart 1: North central Victoria, Australia

The trail is not in a recognised wine region but it is adjacent to Rutherglen, one of Victoria’s better known and historic wine production areas. The Farm Gate Trail could not be considered to be in a premium fine food and wine area. It is in flat, irrigated land occupied principally with mixed farming, citrus and stone fruit pursuits. The area around the Murray River, though, is a prominent vacation spot for campers, and other visitors drawn to the river and its environs for water sport, golf and other recreation. As a result, the river region has a diverse holiday clientele and consequent varied accommodation range. Such holiday housing includes a large and popular timeshare resort in Numurkah, a town of some 3600 people. Visitors to the timeshare resort were said to be involved in further trips around the area to fill in their free time.

The trail consists of a variety of food, wine and horticultural providers. It was considered necessary to get a range of opinion from among those business types in order to maintain balance. After consultation with the trail progenitor, a local tourism official, a semi-structured group interview was arranged with representatives of nut-growers, citrus orchardists, horticulturalists and winery owners. The purpose of the semi-structured group interview was to generate understanding about the attendees’ attitudes towards the development and performance factors of food and wine trails. This group interview took place in the cellar-door of a winery on the trail. Further details of this and subsequent group interviews are taken up later in this chapter, and in Chapter Five.

4.5.2 Poachers Trail

Poachers Trail is in the state of New South Wales and lies just to the north of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) which is in the inland southeast area of the state. The ACT is a small administrative region and Australia's national capital. The main ACT city of Canberra (population; 300 000 plus) is situated approximately 30 kilometres south of the trail proper. Canberra is a significant urban area that dominates the ACT region and near environs. It is home to buildings and sites of national importance and it is a drawcard for domestic and international tourists. Canberra city slowly yields to suburbs and then to extensive mixed agricultural lands as the ACT gives way to rural New South Wales.

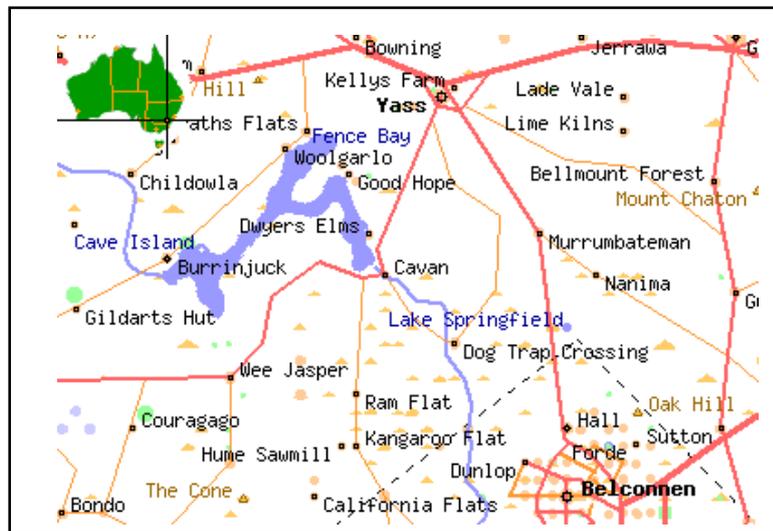


Chart 2: South-east central New South Wales, north of Canberra

The trail stretches for a distance of approximately 70 kilometres between Bowning to the north of Yass, and Sutton which is actually located in the ACT district. The trail runs mainly through gently undulating crop and stock land. There is the occasional small village but there are also extensive grape plantings around the town of Murrumbateman, an area of growing importance in the State's viticultural industry. While the area is thus home to a number of wineries, some quite well-known, it would not be considered a major tourist destination.

Poachers Trail is a composite. It has a strong cadre of food and wine outlets. Around this core cluster accommodation venues, art and craft establishments and a variety of other small businesses. It was necessary to get a variety of responses. After consultation with the trail initiator and coordinator, a semi-structured group interview was held with representatives from a food (and wine) producer, a winery, accommodation venue, art and craft business and a restaurant. The purpose of the semi-structured group interview was to generate

understanding of the attendees' attitudes towards the development and performance factors of trails. The findings are reported in Chapter 5.

4.5.3 The Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker trail

The area of the Barossa lies some 70 kilometres to the north-east of Adelaide, the South Australian state capital. It is a renowned area of significant Australian food and wine history spread around the Para River and its various tributaries. The region is quickly and easily accessible by road from Adelaide.

The Barossa was colonised by émigrés from Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century. Just as significantly, it attracted a large group of Germanic settlers. Together they propagated the area's unique cultural mix and contributed strongly to its development as a wine area. Grapes were first planted in 1847 by the Gramp family. The area's Germanic history is strongly reflected to this day in family names and wine labels such as Jenke, Lehmann and others. There are also strong extant food connections to northern Europe (Heuzenroeder 1999). The area is considered by some to be one of Australia's true gastronomic regions maintaining, as it does, strong links with the food and wine culture of the past (Santich 1996).

The Barossa is one of South Australia's premier tourist destinations and attracts visitors from around Australia and overseas (SATC 2007). They arrive on day trips as well as overnight and extended stays. 'The Barossa ... recorded impressive international visitor statistics in 2007, with visitor nights up 21 per cent, from 45,000 in 2006 to 115,000 in 2007' (Rann 2008). The Barossa's tourist potential is confirmed by the significant number of cellar doors, food houses, accommodation facilities and dining sites in the area.

The Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail was initiated in 1985 and originally took in most of the Barossa area. As the name suggests it features both food and wine sites. The initial trail was promoted as one activity. It was ultimately considered to be too large a task for a tourist to comprehend or undertake the whole trail in a limited time-frame. Not all tourists could visit all venues and this was problematic for those trail businesses trying to promote and sell product via participation in the trail. The trail was subsequently re-launched in 2008 as three sub-trails covering different areas of the Barossa. It was also redeveloped with a saleable smart card package that features a food picnic basket to accompany Barossa

wines. It also offers the purchaser various bonuses and discounts at the 40 plus participating businesses. The trail can still be undertaken without the smart card purchase.

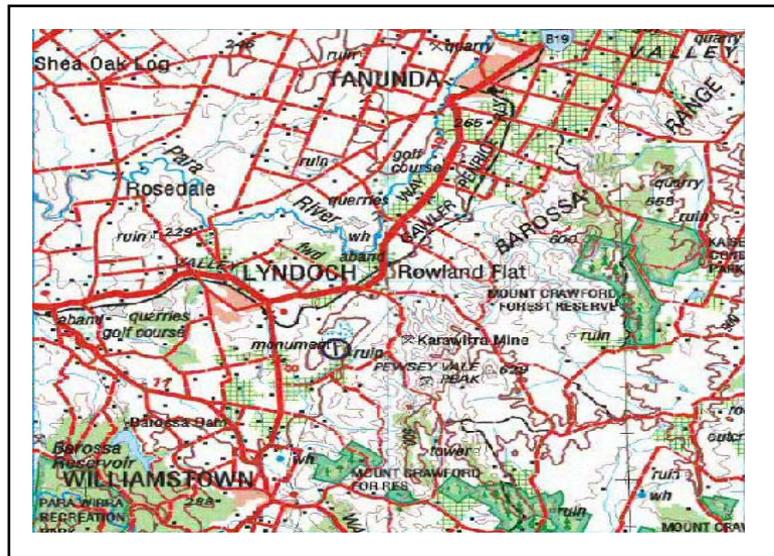


Chart 3: Barossa Valley, South Australia

Individual interviews were conducted with representatives of a number of food and wine agencies, largely obtained through discussions with the trail coordinator, a local tourism official. Some of the business principals were business owners; others were employees of large wine-making concerns. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to generate understanding of the attendees' attitudes towards development and performance factors for trails.

The first three sections of this chapter (sections 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3) have established the context and introduced the principal actors in the research. They have also summarised the potential performance and development factors and outlined the key areas to be investigated with the research participants. This section (4.5) identified the particular trails chosen and provided a rationale for the choice. From the foregoing, and from the contents of the review of literature, it is now possible to describe the development of the research framework, introduce the methods that were used and justify the reasons for such choices. Before so doing, however, the research purpose will be restated in order to present a more complete picture of the research schema.

4.6 Research purpose

To recapitulate, the purpose of this research was to examine Australian food and wine trails in order to identify and analyse the factors critical to their development and performance.

The outcome of the research will be responses to the research objectives established in the Introduction. These will include the presentation of a schematic framework to help interested parties interpret and understand trail operation. This will be a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge on the trail phenomenon because to date this data is currently lacking. The research will assist the proponents of trails to improve both trail performance and tourism, and shed light on the role of trails in regional development and rurality. Such outcomes were previously acknowledged as having the potential to boost local and regional areas through the creation and maintenance of local businesses via direct trail development and the encouragement and development of other associated sectors.

4.7 The research framework

From the review of literature as outlined in the foregoing sections of the methodology, the research landscape for food and wine trails thus includes the following elements:

- There has been little direct research undertaken on food and wine trails in Australia;
- There is no adequate definition of what constitutes a trail in Australia;
- There is insufficient understanding of the contexts and conditions confronting such trails;
- Trails are composed of individual businesses, the principal thrust of which may not be tourism;
- Trail businesses work in conjunction with others, both collaboratively within the trail and outside of it;
- Trail business operators may have different views about the primary issues facing trails, whatever they may be;
- Trails, nevertheless, are a collective social phenomenon and potentially constructed through social interaction;
- Trails operate within a social context. There are other people interested in their performance.

Given the foregoing, the research framework and methods would need to be able to:

- i. Engage with multiple meanings because there may be many and disparate views among the stakeholders which it will be necessary to comprehend;
- ii. Deal with subjectivity, idiosyncrasy and ambiguity because it is likely that no two opinions will be the same and may indeed be contradictory;
- iii. Cope with spontaneity, innovation and emergent ideas because, given the little foreknowledge of the subject and the need to discover it, it is not possible to prejudge what stakeholders might think or say and where their opinions might lead;
- iv. Allow outcomes to develop and grow in order to allow for spontaneity and fullness of response;
- v. Work with contingency, that is, uncertainty and chance, in that opinion might be expressive of peculiar local difference and diversity.

An essential element of the research which the framework must deal with, therefore, is how different stakeholders view trails and understand their participation within them. Essentially, this is how people, individually and jointly, give meaning to trails. Such a conclusion is drawn from the points outlined in the previous two paragraphs. The research framework and methodology need to enable understanding of the various and potentially disparate stakeholder views about food and wine trails and the meanings that people ascribe to them. It will be critical to understand and juxtapose a variety of meanings from within diverse and dynamic contexts and to have a research process that enables new and different attitudes and opinions to be recognised, absorbed and used, or discarded.

The reality of trail presentation, therefore, has to be negotiated by the participants. People construct meaning through interaction. For trails, this means identifying and incorporating or discarding different views and attitudes derived from unique individual business, cultural and physical environments. It is necessary to discuss such differences in order to implement trail outcomes and satisfy diverse needs. Moreover, such understandings can change for as Foddy (1993, p. 20) notes,

Social actors in any given situation are constantly negotiating a shared definition of the situation; taking one another's viewpoints into account; and interpreting one another's behavior as they imaginatively construct possible lines of interaction before selecting lines of action for implementation.

Furthermore, but taking a slightly different tangent, it has been suggested that it is difficult to construct a joint representation of the world when individuals all view their worlds differently, being, '... slap bang in the middle of it' (Thrift 1999, p. 297) so to speak. To understand food and wine trails, therefore, has to be to understand the ideals, attitudes, and values, perhaps even ethics of the participant business owners and managers; a process that requires meaningful interaction between the researcher and the stakeholders.

Hence, the most germane research paradigm for this work is an interpretivist framework, and qualitative methodology. The reasons for such preferences follow. The over-riding reason is that, 'interpretive research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members' definition of a situation' (Gephart 1999, p. 2)—exactly what this research entails. This research is essentially phenomenological; it will uncover the meanings that trails have for the persons studied. It is then about, 'building a second order of theory of social members' theories' (p. 4).

The choice of an interpretivist framework in research such as this is most apt because it concentrates on social agency (Walter 2006). It is concerned with the people who, as social beings, interrelate and interact with and about food and wine trails. From the interpretivist perspective, society is fundamentally a world of meaning. Understanding trails means understanding how people make sense of them; it is essentially about understanding the meanings and interpretations that the stakeholders give to their experience.

The complexity of human behaviour and understanding makes the choice of interpretivism apposite. Interpretivism implies a view of reality that assumes multiple constructions of truth (Green 2002). Such a view is consistent with the need to understand the views of a diverse respondent group of trail business operators and other stakeholders often working in different locations. It is necessary to stay open to diversity and contradiction, allow for differences and shades of meaning because, as Frost says, 'If you know before you look, you cannot see for knowing' (Frost cited in Lang, T & Heasman 2004, p. 11). The data collection process will now be depicted and the various qualitative research methods will be described as they were utilised.

4.8 Data collection

In keeping with the context outlined earlier, the principal data collection involved work with three groups as follows:

- Trail businesses
- Trail tourist-consumers
- Ancillary agents

Data collection was not always a linear process in that the interactions with one group were completed before the next was started. There was overlap at certain points. The data collection process will be described separately for each group. From a real time standpoint, however, the processes overlapped at certain points and this will be elaborated upon later.

4.8.1 Trail businesses

The data were collected from trail businesses using semi-structured group interviews. Semi-structured group interviews are ones where responses,

... can't be produced in advance and where you as interviewer therefore have to *improvise* probably half ... of your responses to what they say in response to your *initial* prepared question or questions (Wengraf 2001, p. 5)

Semi-structured interviews were used because they are considered most relevant where research is about new material and where it is important to find out about basic issues, and

theorise a subject (Judd, Smith & Kidder 1991). This is certainly the case with food and wine trails where little is known or understood. Semi-structured group interviews are also considered appropriate where the researcher seeks to gather, as in this instance, ‘... informants’ stories and perspectives and is far more open to complexity, ambiguity and things that had not been anticipated or considered’ (Knight 2002, p. 63). Travers (2006) reinforces the case for their use by indicating that the specific strengths of in-depth (semi-structured) interviews are that they permit the research to address meaning in depth—a research criterion—and make it possible to address the experiences of people in a variety of social settings and over a wide range of topics.

Early advocates of qualitative research proscribed the use of literature reviews prior to interview believing that such information had the potential to skew the data collection (Glaser & Strauss 1967). More recent opinion suggests that while it is necessary to remain open to the potential for innovation and change it is important to begin with some initial ideas (Esterberg 2002). This necessitated the development of a set of themes and open-ended questions for use with the owners/managers and staff of trail businesses. (See Appendix Two) For, as Morse and Richards (2002, p. 94) attest, while discussing the utility of the semi-structured questionnaire,

Sometimes, the researcher knows enough about the phenomenon or the domain of inquiry to develop questions about the topic in advance of interviewing, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers.

The themes for consideration by the business principals were initially developed through the review of literature and are documented earlier in this chapter (see section 4.2). As indicated previously (Chapter Two), however, such concepts were theoretical in that, as food and wine trails are little researched in Australia, they had to be conjectured. It was necessary, therefore, to put such conjecture to a practical test in order to assess the suitability of the themes within the research.

4.8.1.1 Trail businesses survey development

It was crucial to gauge the utility and value of the themes. This was undertaken in a pilot study conducted with a number of business principals presently engaged in food and wine trails—but not selected to be in this research. Prior to embarking upon this study some background research had been undertaken with food and wine trails in the Gippsland region of eastern Victoria (Mason 2003). It was resolved to seek the cooperation of three individual businesses on one of those trails, the Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail located

between the Nicholson and Tambo rivers in East Gippsland, Victoria, Australia, in order to do a pilot study. The initial responses of the trail businesses would help determine the relevance of the themes before engaging in interviews with the business owners and managers in the three trails chosen for this research.

The Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail was chosen because its location is strongly rural and can be seen to be similar in position to the three main trails being researched. It is in an area quite distant from major cities and towns. It is, however, situated astride a major traffic artery bringing visitors to the Gippsland Lakes, a major boating and fishing vacation spot in Victoria. It was thus similar in location to both the Poachers and Farm Gate trails in that they too are located in domains which draw visitors through rather than to their areas. It was believed that responses from businesses on this trail would thus be relevant to the main trails being researched. The Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail is a small trail which comprised eight businesses at the time of interviews. They included a stone fruit orchard, two vineyards, a couple of berry farms, two miscellaneous food suppliers and a café in the modest country town of Bruthen. The owners of the stone fruit orchard, one of the vineyards and the café were chosen as a sample of food and wine producers.

The themes were worked into a set of tentative questions designed to probe the suitability of the concepts found in the review of literature. Individual interviews were arranged and conducted with three principals at their business locations on the Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail. All themes identified in section 4.3 resonated in some way with the respondents interviewed. From a development standpoint, the chief ideas that emerged involved the economic difficulties confronting small vineyards in selling their wine and in placing their wine into restaurants, bottle shops, liquor chains and the like. A food and wine trail was seen as a way of bringing customers to the door. For the food distributors it was largely the difficulty of working with commercial food chains, getting an adequate return on investment and work undertaken. Retailing food through a farm shed, on a trail, was judged to provide greater financial return—although all principals commented on the amount of work it took to be open to tourist visitation. From a performance point of view, venues need to be ready for tourists, to understand who they were and why they visited. The power of rurality as nostalgia was also identified.

At this point, the themes had been developed and trialled. From this position it was then necessary to prepare some preliminary interview material in advance for the three trails

being researched. Because it was not believed possible to ascertain what the interviewees were going to say beforehand, follow-up questions were theorised rather than prepared. Such preliminary questions were developed using the themes from the review of literature and the findings from the Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail.

The initial preliminary questions and the structured interview format were further tested with trail operators on the Southern Highlands Food and Wine Trail. This trail, located near the town of Bowral, two hours south of Sydney, New South Wales, was commended by the wine and food tourism officer at Tourism New South Wales. It was felt that further pilot testing in another state would ensure that both the questions and the researcher were well prepared to conduct the more formal study. The Southern Highlands trail was chosen because it is not far from a state capital, Sydney, and it is in a more touristed area thus making it rather similar to the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. The Bowral region does not, however, have a strong name for food and wine such as that carried by the Barossa Valley. Nevertheless, Bowral is a heavily touristed zone with a growing tourist reputation in food and wine.

An evening semi-structured group interview was arranged in a winery cellar door which was attended by four people consisting of the interviewer, a representative of the winery and two food and wine producers on the trail. This was an effective approach as the preliminary question material generated a lot of feedback and went in directions that had not necessarily been predicted. None of the questions were invalidated, however. Particular points of interest for the researcher included the question of trail ownership, organisation and management. The importance of understanding the different state regulatory conditions for setting up trails and the handling of alcohol were also emphasised. This was material that had to be considered when further interviews took place especially as there are differences in food and legislation in each of the three states (Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia).

The semi-structured group interview format worked effectively with the group in the Southern Highlands and none of the interviewees appeared fazed by the process. This supports Travers's (2006) view that the value of semi-structured interviews is in their familiarity; people are now used to them. They are very much a part of modern life. Richards (2005, p. 38) confirms this opinion and adds that, 'an interview is both the most ordinary and the most extraordinary of ways you could use to explore someone else's experience—it is as ordinary as conversation and as amazing as a brilliant film'.

When the Southern Highlands trail and the Twin Rivers trail are included with the three main trails, the geographical scope of the research covers an immense area of south-eastern Australia. This is largely covered by a triangle with Bowral, Melbourne and Adelaide at its furthest points. (See Chart 4) The distance between Bowral (adjacent to the Southern Highlands Food and Wine Trail) and Tanunda (in the Barossa trail region) is about 1500 kilometres, Tanunda to Melbourne about 750 kilometres, Melbourne to Canberra some 650 kilometres and Canberra to Bowral approximately 150 kilometres. The Twin Rivers trail is about 300 kilometres east of Melbourne. The following map illustrates the geographic spread of the research work undertaken. Most of the work for this research was undertaken by car and involved significant travel hours and a number of overnight stays. Melbourne to the Barossa, for instance, is a ten-hour drive and was undertaken three times.

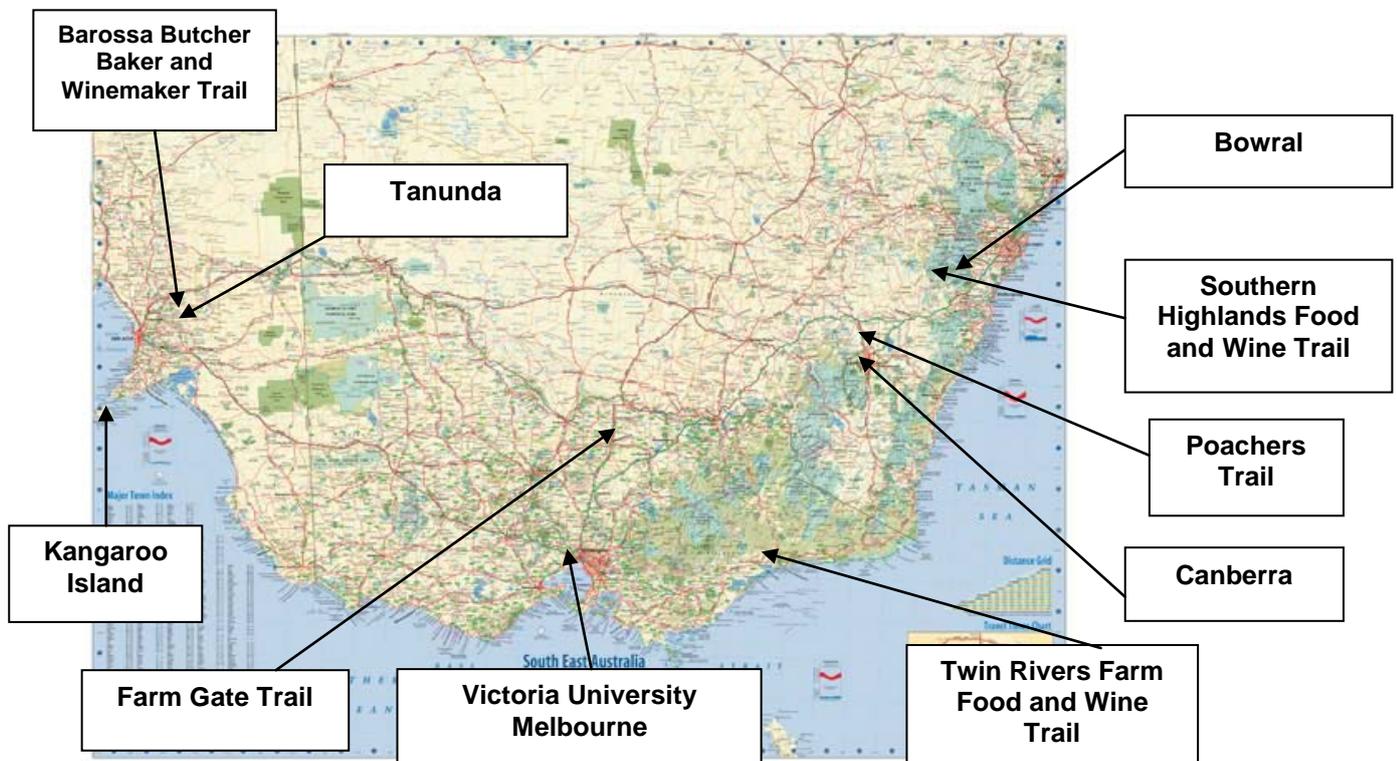


Chart 4: South-east Australia

Transcripts of all discussions were retained as were transcripts of all group and individual interviews. All interviews, with participant approval, were recorded using a small digital recorder. This method was used, ‘... to provide a check against bias or misinterpretation’ (Opie 2004, p. 123) and enabled thorough understanding of the interviews to take place. Recording was also used to preserve the natural language; provide an objective record; enable the inputs of the interviewer to be recorded; and facilitate analysis of the material.

At this point the preliminary trialling of concepts had been completed and the development of a set of preliminary questions for use in interviews with business principals had been successfully undertaken. Two trails had been used to trial the processes. Follow up questions had also been identified (Wengraf 2001). The interviewer was comfortable with the semi-structured group interview process and confident that it worked. It was now time to begin the main research.

4.8.1.2 Transcripts and data analysis

The pilot testing of the research themes and work with the semi-structured group interview format had been completed at this juncture. No undue complications had eventuated. A number of emphases had been noted and detailed, as indicated in previous paragraphs of this section. The concepts were deemed to be apposite and the methods appropriate. It was now time to turn to the formal interviews and fully engage in the research.

4.8.1.3 Farm Gate Trail operators interview

The first formal interview was conducted on the premises of a winery on the Farm Gate Trail. The interviewees included a second generation winery owner, a woman who had taken over the day-to-day running of the business from her immigrant father and was responsible for the commercial success of the operation. There was an owner of an almond grove. He, along with his wife, had taken on the property later in life after business careers elsewhere and were trying to make a success of the business with an aim to potential sale in the future. The third interviewee owned an orange orchard with her husband. They had been in the business for a considerable amount of years with sales mainly aimed at the commercial supermarkets. Both orange grove principals undertook work outside the property in order to generate income in times of limited water supply and hence limited harvests. The final interviewee had developed a horticultural business selling a variety of agricultural and horticultural products.

As indicated earlier, the semi-structured group interview took place in a cellar door (tasting room) of the winery owned by the first interviewee noted in the previous paragraph..

Interviews on local sites were favoured in order to honour the actual conditions in which people operate. It was believed that in such real and natural settings the research would discover or uncover more of what can be known about food and wine trails. In all cases the meetings were arranged in the premises of the trail operators. In the case of the Farm Gate Trail this was in the tasting room of the winery, after hours.

A non-probability sampling technique was used to identify appropriate respondents for all semi-structured interviews and this was augmented by chain referral or 'snowball' sampling' (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981). Chain referral sampling is a technique for developing a research sample where existing subjects recruit appropriate further subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. Referral sampling was utilised because it was not possible to know in advance which trail business operators would be most appropriate by way of connection and experience to participate in the research. The experience of research participants was used to generate other participants. The Farm Gate Trail group had four business participants representing a winery, orchard, horticultural business (herbs) and an almond grove.

4.8.1.4 Poachers Trail operators interview

The process for this interview largely utilised the same methods as that for the Farm Gate Trail. The semi-structured interview technique was again employed. The particular individuals at the meeting were suggested by the trail coordinator who had initiated the trail originally and was familiar with the people involved. A craft business operator was forced to withdraw from participation at the last moment. The semi-structured group interview was held in a small room attached to the restaurant and winery venue. The interview was lively and participative with all members contributing.

The interviewee group consisted of the owner of the food and wine venue in which the interview took place. She had come to the area from a previous high-level commercial background in Melbourne. Her intention was to develop both the food and wine sides of the business which were located on grazing properties owned by her husband and herself. A male interviewee owned a winery nearby. He had come to the area some 30 years ago with his wife in search of a lifestyle change to grow grapes and make wine. He had slowly built the winery up from nothing into a competitive enterprise. Another woman interviewee was the owner of a successful restaurant and accommodation facility in a nearby town. She brought considerable business acumen to the task as she had worked in the hospitality/ tourism sector for some time. The next interviewee was the owner of a small accommodation establishment for which he was both chef and manager. The final interviewee was a local person who had initially left the area to undertake skills training in a particular craft . He had brought those skills back to establish a glass-blowing and ceramics operation, a very successful business located at one end of the trail.

All the interviews conducted with trail business respondents were transcribed and coded using concept identification software. Respondents were given codenames to protect their identities. Consent forms were utilised and interview transcripts were sent to them for review prior to embedding quotes in the thesis. The data were analysed using a thematic approach that assessed each response initially against the themes presented. In preparing the research, results were written up thematically according to the conceptual framework proposed. Each key theme was described and the views of stakeholders embedded as direct quotations.

The business operators on the Farm Gate and Poachers trails generated 16 factors with potential to influence the development and performance of food and wine trails. They were:

- The need for adequate promotion
- Existence of a trail theme
- Effective trail coordination
- Responding to the tourist need for experience
- Being 'tourist ready'
- Providing a quality product
- Providing a quality experience
- Provision of adequate roads, parking and signage
- Support and recognition of the trail by government and semi-government agencies
- Having a variety of businesses and experiences on the trail
- A warm welcome and willingness to talk with tourists
- Trusting and relying on other businesses on the trail
- Abiding by government regulations
- Provision of clean, comfortable and hospitable premises
- Having a 'story' to present to the visitor

These points are introduced here but are a more detailed analysis and examination of their relevance is undertaken in Chapter Five.

The material had now been considered by four trail groups; a pilot test with the Twin Rivers trail, a pilot with the Southern Highlands trail as well as the interviews with two trails in the study, the Poachers and Farm Gate trails just discussed. It was apparent at this stage that the responses had begun to repeat. A further interview along the same lines did not seem warranted. At this point, therefore, and consistent with emergent design theory (Maykut & Morehouse 1994), it was decided to take a different approach to the third group interview in the Barossa Valley. It appeared unlikely at this point that new factors would be developed although the potential for such discovery existed and new factors could be added if and when necessary. It was decided, therefore, to prepare a set of index cards (see Appendix Three) with the above factors written on them and ask the interviewees at a point in the next interview to rank the cards (factors) in the order of significance as they saw them. These

cards would be presented to business participants on the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. This was to be done as part of the interview process and not to replace it. The presentation involved an opportunity for the interviewees to add their own new factors if they saw fit.

Such a development in the research is consistent with the idea of emergent design which allows for new ideas to be uncovered as the research progresses (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). In this case the card/factors were to be used to develop a more total picture of the elements that affect the performance and development of trails and to get an assessment of priorities from some participants. This was vital for, 'it is this very notion of pursuing important or salient early discoveries that undergirds qualitative approaches to inquiry' (1994, p. 44).

4.8.1.5 Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail operator interviews

The first attempt to generate a joint meeting of such business operators failed. The researcher made every effort to set up such a meeting, even travelling to the Barossa Valley from Melbourne, a distance of some 850 kilometres, in order to accomplish this. It was believed that a personal contact with potential interviewees rather than a telephone call would make setting up a joint interview more likely. This had proved a successful method in the first two group interviews. It also appeared to be initially successful in the Barossa. However, work commitments and unexpected meetings for three participants reduced the potential interview group to two. This did not seem large enough to either generate a variety of opinion or justify the attendance of the others. The first meeting was therefore abandoned.

A second attempt to generate a group interview in the Barossa also proved problematic due to the varied demands on personnel at various time in the primary production cycles; grape harvesting for instance. At this point it was decided that one-on-one interviews might be more appropriate. As it turned out this was a serendipitous choice as the single interviews enabled a broader focus on the card/factors while generating more personal and idiosyncratic responses to the research questions as a whole. As such the process provided richer insight, added more depth and built further upon the contribution of the earlier group interviews

Five interviews were conducted for the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail with six interviewees in total. Interviews took place on the premises of three major Australian wineries; one person in each of two interviews, two in another. The people interviewed were senior management figures within the wineries with significant histories with their

companies and the regions. The large wineries were all international operations, one owned by an Australian organisation, another in the portfolio of one of the world’s largest beverage businesses and the third owned by a Swiss-based hospitality company. Further interviews took place with the co-owner of a small food operation in the Barossa Valley that also sold wine. She had long family connections with the area and had been making and selling Barossa-based food for years. The final interview was with a member of the family that owned a small winery and food provider. These interviews ranked the card/factors as established by the business operators in the earlier group interviews. In brief (and this will be developed further in Chapter Five), the operators considered that product and service quality, a worthwhile experience and readiness for tourists were three crucial factors.



Figure 4.2: The principal stakeholders of food and wine trails (repeated)

An initial summary of factors important to the development and performance of food and wine trails as understood by trail business operators was presented in the previous section (4.8.1.4). These findings, which are elaborated upon in the next chapter, were derived from a process which can be summarised as follows. First, a thorough review of literature was undertaken. The relevance of that material was then assessed through pilot studies with business operators on two food and wine trails both individually and in a group. These data were then consolidated, and further considered by the business operators on the three trails being formally researched. This process both confirmed the material from the literature review and enriched the data through a continually accumulative means of information gathering.

With the completion of the Barossa interviews, data collection from the first of the three groups identified in Figure 4.2 (introduced in section 4.3 and repeated above) had been accomplished, *viz* food and wine trail operators. The opinions of operators from trails in the

states of Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales had been canvassed. The trails represented rural and peri-urban locations in three states and encompassed a variety of food and wine producers. Opinions on development factors had been generated, and performance factors had been put forward and ranked by this cohort. After the interviews with trail businesses were well underway the process of surveying tourist-consumers to trail sites commenced. A summary of that process now follows.

4.8.2 Trail tourist-consumers

The previous section detailed the factors that impact upon trail development and performance from the standpoint of the businesses involved. This section looks at the second group identified in Figure 4.2 above, the tourist-consumers. The purpose of obtaining information from this group was twofold. First the information was necessary in order to contrast it with the ideas generated by the food and wine businesses so that a consensus might be identified or the differences noted about trail performance. Second, data on the tourist-consumers themselves were also considered useful in order to compare them with other research on food and wine tourists more broadly.

4.8.2.1 Tourist-consumer surveys

Analysis of the operator data provided a source of information for the collection of material from the tourist-consumers. Specific information from tourist-consumers was gathered in two ways, however. First, surveys were distributed. (The development of the survey instrument is dealt with in more detail in Appendices One, Two and Three.) Second, phone follow-ups were organised with those who indicated a willingness to be contacted in this way.

Visitors were apprehended on their way into the venue and asked to participate in the research on their way out. Details of the type of participants are contained in the next chapter on Findings. The intercept method, however, did generate a wide range of participants, of both genders and of all ages.

4.8.2.2 Survey distribution

Surveys were distributed on-site over five two-day periods. Tourist-consumers at food and wine trail sites were located using an intercept method, a process used previously in tourism research (Schneider & Sönmez 1999). Responses were sought through the use of a survey with closed and open-ended questions as well as Likert-like scale response prompts. The

survey content was taken from the review of literature. The demographic material derived particularly from research done on the food and wine tourist (in particular, Ignatov & Smith 2006; Sparks et al. 2005). This was supplemented by data gained from the initial interviews with trail businesses and so reflected the emergent nature of the research as reflected previously (Maykut & Morehouse 1994).

It was important to get a diversity of opinion from tourists (see Figure 4.2). It was believed the most appropriate way to achieve this end was through interviewing at least 50 people on each trail in order to get both men and women, young and old and, where possible, tourists from home bases near and far. It was also necessary to determine whether trail visitors were coming to the various sites because of its tourism potential, that is, because it was part of a trail, or whether they were there because of shopping patterns or other factors again. Fifty people from each trail was deemed adequate to generate the variety of opinion needed. The figure was chosen because the research did not rely on quantity for statistical purposes. Rather, it was important to provide general information on the tourist-consumers and locate a number of potential phone interviewees to follow up for more detailed insights and assessments of their attitudes towards trails. The number was also thought to be achievable within a two-day or weekend timetable. The possibility of going beyond that was limited by the unavailability of the research venues at certain times and the time available to the researcher.

The researcher presented at the five food and wine trail sites after obtaining prior approval from the owner-managers. At the Farm Gate Trail, the data collection was done at a winery over a two day period during the Easter vacation, a prime tourist time for this area. It was therefore believed to be an appropriate time to generate the required number of surveys as the reason for visits would be a tourist related. The second set of Farm Gate Trail interviews was undertaken over a two-day period in late Spring, also a time believed by the owners to be appropriate for data collection. On the Poachers Trail, the data collection was done during the period of the Anzac Day holiday, a national holiday dedicated to honour war service and a significant period for vacation travellers. This date was chosen to maximise potential participation. Both sets of Barossa interviews were undertaken over two day periods in early winter. Such is the huge drawing power of the Barossa region as a year round tourist resort; it was not believed that winter would be in any way prejudicial to the collection of data. This proved to be the case.

In all instances the researcher was located outside or close to the main entry door of the venue and visitors were intercepted on their way into the premises. All potential respondents were asked if they would be willing to fill in a survey on food and wine tourism. They were not asked to undertake the survey immediately but were requested, if they were willing, to complete it on their way out. It was anticipated that such a method would place less pressure on potential respondents whose intentions and interests were elsewhere (ie. they were focused on being a food and wine tourist at the location) and thus encourage their participation. Returned surveys numbered 175 in total.

4.8.2.3 Phone follow-up interviews

The survey included a box on the last page which asked the respondents to indicate whether they would be prepared to speak further, by phone, about their responses and experiences. If so, a space was provided for a phone number, email address and a contact name. The intention here was to pick up all trail participants who indicated a willingness to discuss their experiences further and expand on their particular responses.

The 20 visitors who indicated that they would be willing to discuss their responses on the phone were contacted as soon as possible and most follow-up interviews took place within two weeks of the initial contact at the trail venue. Prompt contact was believed necessary in order for the material to remain foremost in the subjects' memories. In a small number of cases the subjects were on extended leave and the follow-up was not possible for some time. The researcher undertook an initial phone contact with the respondent, indicated the purpose of the follow-up call and arranged a date that would be convenient for the person to be interviewed. The phone interviews took up to half an hour. All phone calls were recorded with approval of the interviewees.

During the phone interviews the respondents were asked to expand upon the five points that they had ticked as being of most importance to them on their visit. So, if they had indicated 'an enjoyable experience' as being of importance to them they were asked to describe what that meant to them. This was a valuable method as it enabled the researcher to question just what was meant by the particular responses; 'an enjoyable experience' being one that generated different and sometimes divergent answers. This method provided rich and deep data that again confirmed much of the material generated in the literature about modern food and wine tourists but also provided insight into the attitudes and expectations of tourists more broadly. This was particularly so because the respondents were also asked as to why

they were visiting the regions they were in and what such tourism meant to them. A full description of the results follows in Chapter Five.

4.8.2.4 Transcripts and analyses

The phone interviews were transcribed and coded using a concept identification method. Respondents were given codes to protect their identities. Consent forms were utilised and the interview transcripts were sent to them for review prior to embedding quotes in the thesis.

The data was analysed using a thematic approach that assessed each response initially against the themes presented. Results were written up thematically according to the conceptual framework proposed. Each key theme was described and the views of stakeholders embedded as direct quotations.

4.8.3 Tourist-consumers research venues

As indicated in research on the trail businesses (see section 4.5), the focus of the research is on trails that feature both food and wine. It was important, therefore, to gather tourist responses from food and wine venues on the three trails as well. This was necessary in order to obtain a balanced assessment of opinion and potential demographics. Where feasible, visitors were surveyed at venues where both food and wine were presented as products. If this was not possible then visitors were interviewed at separate sites on the trail that featured either food or wine in order to get a balance overall. On the Farm Gate Trail in Victoria it was necessary to obtain results at two separate venues; a winery and a cheesery. On the Poachers Trail in New South Wales it was possible to interview visitors at a joint food and wine facility. The results at Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail in South Australia were obtained at two venues; a major winery and a well-known food producer. Descriptions of the various venues now follow.

4.8.3.1 Farm Gate Trail

The Farm Gate Trail offered no venues in which food and wine could be considered together so it was necessary to work with two venues in order to get data from food and wine tourist-consumers. A small winery was chosen for one part of the consumer research. The second venue used was a cheese making facility.

The winery is a well-established property that commenced as a vineyard operation in the 1960s and has remained in the same family since that time. It is located central to the trail, slightly away from the main road between Melbourne to the south and the Murray River

vacation areas in northern Victoria. It was thus considered readily accessible to visitors. In addition, the winery has roadside signposting on roads entering the area from all directions.

The cheese-making venue is situated some 20 kilometres away from the winery but in a similar region of the trail. It is located some six kilometres away from the nearest small town in flat, dry farming terrain. Access necessitates a kilometre of travel along a gravel road.

The cheese producer is located on a dairy farm which produces milk for sale to a large commercial milk company. Product is retained for use in farmhouse cheese manufacture in an on-farm 'cheesery'. The cheesery produces only cheese and offers few other food options, and no wine. They do sell honey and chutneys which are produced nearby. The range is not extensive, however, and not critical to the venue's operation. It was therefore deemed suitable to act as an exclusive food provider to balance the winery. The couple who operate the cheesery do operate a cafe in a small rural town nearby but that is not advertised as part of the trail activities.

The visitor research was undertaken at the winery over the Easter holidays, generally an extended weekend public holiday period throughout Australia which encompasses Good Friday through to the following Monday. The period was chosen because of the potential for linkage to leisure as the area is well-known as a holiday destination. The premises were closed on Good Friday but the business principal had agreed to allow research activities on the other days. The owner could not give an estimate of traffic as the holiday period has a variable history of visitation and, while some general advertising was undertaken, there was no guarantee of response.

The interviewer was there for a similar three to four hour period over each of three days, beginning at 10.30 am and going through until 2.00 pm. The subjects were intercepted on their way into the winery premises (the cellar door) from the car park and asked if they would agree to participate in a survey on their way out. The interviewer was positioned at a table in the garden area adjacent to both the cellar door and the car park, readily visible to departing visitors. No-one refused to participate although in a few cases one of the couples or family members that were visiting deferred to another member of their group to fill in the survey on their behalf. Thirty three surveys were thus obtained from some 40 adults (33/40). Possibly three visiting groups or couples were missed in this way, usually due to the interviewer being preoccupied with interviews at the time of the additional arrivals.

On the Sunday the winery owner indicated that there would be a number of people coming for lunch. While there is no separate restaurant as such, a variety of foods is available and people can eat either at tables inside the cellar door or outside in the garden under the trees. Because many such people were attending for lunch on Easter Sunday, often in what seemed casual family or friendship groups, their participation was not sought. Rather, only those who were attending as visitors to the cellar door facility at times prior to and after the lunch period were asked to participate. In this way those that were visiting for the purpose of dining only were weeded out. While the four days in question was a school holiday period, very few children were visible and it appeared they were generally accompanying luncheon groups.

At the other Farm Gate Trail venue, the cheesery, the interviewer was present over a two-day weekend in early May. This was not a school holiday period. The proprietors do not open the cheesery every weekend as the demands of their different marketing approaches and limited staffing mean they cannot be in all places at once. Nevertheless, the proprietors suggested that visitors were attracted at all times of the year when they were open, their availability being advertised through a trail brochure and other means. Their opening hours were confirmed on a large conspicuous sign on the main road through the small town nearby. The visitation is encouraged by the location, close to a holiday area, the same one that benefits the winery. Their position is also adjacent to a main north-south road from Melbourne to the Murray River. The interviewer was present from 10 am to 4 pm both days and was located at the entrance to the cheesery building. Similar to the winery, the interviewer asked all incomers if they would be prepared to take the survey upon their exit from the cheesery and, with the exception of one couple who demurred, all couples or groups asked provided one or more surveys. One couple and one small group were missed during this period as the interviewer was busy with other interviewees at the time. Sixteen people filled in a survey at the cheesery. This was a smaller number than filled it in at the winery. It gave a total figure of 49 for the Farm Gate Trail.

4.8.3.2 Poachers Trail

The next group of consumers was found at a combined food, wine and cafe outlet on the Poachers Trail. The one venue consists of three sections; a smoked produce outlet, a cellar door based on its own vineyard, and a restaurant-café. It therefore has both a wine and a food

attraction. Because of this it was deemed large enough in both categories to provide the number of tourist surveys required.

The venue used to collect the surveys from consumers is rural, located on a large, mixed farm operation and situated adjacent to the farm homestead. It is at least 15 kilometres from a township of any size. Access to the property necessitates a trip off the main Canberra-Yass road along well sign-posted macadamised rural roads. The last couple of kilometres, however, are on the farm proper and visitors enter over a rudely-maintained gravel surface.

The venue on the Poachers Trail was surveyed over the Anzac Day, Friday-Monday long weekend in April. Anzac Day is the Australian holiday dedicated to honour war-time service personnel. It is typically seen as the last long weekend of the summer season, a busy tourist period, and therefore considered an appropriate time to gather survey instruments from consumers.

The interviewer was present from 10 am – 11.30 am Friday and Saturday and 2.30 pm to 5 pm on Friday. The lunch period was avoided as there were significant lunch bookings and it was believed that the times chosen would yield a more representative sample of visitors touring the area. The interviewer was situated outside the door to the premises and asked visitors before they entered whether they would be prepared to fill in a survey form on their way out. Fifty-three surveys were received. Three couples were identified as not being asked to fill in the survey, they were missed due to the interviewer's preoccupation with other visitors at the time. One couple was asked and demurred, saying that they had just driven out on a whim to have a look at the place. One pair, a grandfather and grandson who had cycled out for a coffee did not fill in the survey. Not everyone filled in the survey, in some cases one of a couple would defer to another or certain group members would fill it in and not others. Seventy per cent of visitors during the period would have filled in a survey.

4.8.3.3 Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail

The third group of consumers was drawn from two sites on the trail in the Barossa Valley. The first venue was a large, purpose-built and modern visitor centre located in a winery of international repute. The winery is south of Tanunda, a well-established town in the Barossa Valley, and the visitor centre is accessed via a one-kilometre drive through picturesque vineyard scenery. The venue contains a display centre featuring photos and video footage of the horticultural history of the site and a chronicle of the various families and companies that have developed it. There is also a sizeable tasting area and a restaurant that offers lunches

and evening meals. The visitor centre has a large parking area and visitors enter over a well-maintained and sealed road leading away from a main thoroughfare through the Barossa Valley. The entrance to the winery is well-marked with the banners of the brand and is easily recognisable and accessible.

The second Barossa site was located to the north-west of Tanunda. It carries a well-known almost iconic Australian brand name. The business sells a variety of foodstuffs including chutneys, cheeses, sauces, spices and condiments as well as its own range of wine. The brand has a strong domestic and international food reputation largely due to the principal's success as a food producer, author and television chef. The venue was originally a farm site that developed into a small food production unit before the business got too big and had to relocate most production elsewhere. The farm site is now used mainly as a retail outlet and demonstration area for the food and wine produced by the organisation. There is also a small café with indoor and outdoor seating. The venue is a single level building set in a rural location. Parking is adequate. The access is down narrow, macadamised rural roads that spill into an unsealed entrance to the premises. The venue also features a small but varied display of farm wildlife and produce in pens and plots. Both venues are located centrally and within easy driving distance of Tanunda, the main town of the Barossa Valley. Both venues it was believed would provide adequate survey numbers.

The winery management had approved the distribution of the surveys to visitors over a two-day period. The interviewer was present from 10 am to 12 noon and 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm on two mid-week days in early August. This was mid-winter but such is the usual drawing power of Barossa and the winery that the marketing staff believed that it would be possible to collect a viable number of surveys. The figure of 153, 000 visitors in total during 2006-7 was given as supporting evidence. The 12 noon to 2.30 pm time period was avoided in order to minimise contact with people who might only be arriving for lunch.

The interviewer was located inside the main door leading into the premises in ready view of visitors entering and leaving the site. All visitors between the hours cited above were asked to fill in a survey on their way out; most complied. One couple demurred and one couple did not have strong enough language comprehension to enable them to complete the document. Two tour buses were avoided as these were largely international backpackers brought to the site as part of a general tourist journey around the Barossa. All visitors entered as couples or clusters and a survey was obtained from nearly all such groups. Those that were missed

happened when the interviewer was preoccupied with survey administration. The initial assumption was that men, women and age groups were fairly equally represented. A total of 46 surveys was received.

With the food venue, it was agreed with the management that the interviewer would be present from 1 pm to 3 pm on a mid-week afternoon in winter. This coincided with a normal period of food demonstration that operates alongside the business’s usual retail trade. The interviewer was situated on a small porch outside the main door to the building. All people entering the premises during that period were asked to fill in the survey form on their way out. Most people complied although it was possible for some visitors to exit via the outdoor café area and so physically bypass the area where the surveys were distributed. One person was seen to enter the premises by himself; the others came in couples or groups. The initial impression was that there were more women than men in the group surveyed. Twenty seven surveys were collected making 73 for the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker trail overall. Numbers for the tourist-consumer surveys are contained in the following table.

Farm Gate Trail	Survey no.
Wine venue	33
Food venue	16
Poachers Trail (wine and food venue)	53
Barossa Butcher Baker and Winemaker Trail	
Wine venue	46
Food venue	27
Total	175

Table 4.4 Tourist-consumer survey numbers

The data from tourist-consumers were thus gained from visitors to five food and/or wine producing outlets from the three trails. The purpose of this aspect of the research was to generate data from trail visitors which would support, refute or supplement development and performance factors as determined previously by trail businesses. It also provided additional demographic information that would help ascertain the type of tourist attracted to such trails. That was particularly important given the paucity of information that is available about such people.

The findings of the research for tourist-consumers are detailed in Chapter Five. In summary, however, the tourist-consumers largely replicate the desire for an enjoyable experience that

was also identified by trail business operators. Moreover, the tourist-consumers stressed the need for a warm welcome and the capacity to know more about the products. The conclusion of the data gathering for the tourist-consumers finished the collection of data for the second group identified in Figure 4.2. It was then time to turn to the third group, Ancillary operators. Details of the process of gaining data from that group now follow.

4.8.4 Ancillary operator/agency interviews

Nine interviews were arranged and conducted by phone or face-to-face. In one other case, a written response was obtained. There are not many ancillary agents overall. The purpose of these interviews, in part, was to triangulate the data with the material obtained from the business operators and the tourist-consumers (Minichiello et al. 1995). As the latter two groups are the key participant groups for trails it was important to maximise their data input and ten ancillary agents was considered sufficient to generate data against which the first two groups could be compared. In the face-to-face ancillary interviews the respondents were presented with the findings from the trails to that point. In phone interviews the interviewees were sent a one-page summary of the research findings (see Appendix Four) so that they had a way in which to focus their responses. The one-page summary was sent as a prompt, however, and discussions with this group of people ranged over the research findings but also incorporated their general attitudes towards food, wine and tourism and their attitudes to trails overall.

As apparent from this research to date, no food and wine trail operates in a vacuum; a point made in the review of literature and emphasised in section 4.4.2. They are all dynamically interconnected with their communities and the broader world around them. In that world are agencies, private and public, interested in the development and performance of food and wine trails. These include local and state government tourist officers connected with each state and trail. For local and state tourism, food and wine tourism is a priority, a point made strongly in Chapter One. The attitude of such authorities towards food and wine trails may help or hinder trail performance. Thus their understanding of that performance is important to gauge. State tourism authorities for New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria were interviewed about trails. Regional tourism officials for all three trails were interviewed. For Poachers Trail this meant the local Australian Capital Territory tourist official. Local small businesses such as bed and breakfasts that might get economic spin-offs as a result of trails, have a view about their performance. A bed and breakfast owner from the Farm Gate Trail

region was interviewed. Other people that have been referred to as food and wine 'champion' (see section 2.3.6) are also of importance. In this case a regional food and wine appointee from the Southern Highlands was also asked for her opinions. The group of respondents interviewed in this section this covers the range of potential categories referred to in the purpose of the research (see section 1.5) and in Figure 4.2.

With one exception, the interviews used the themes established earlier, the responses given by the operators and the preferences as established by the tourist-consumer. The exception was a food and wine 'champion' from the Southern Highlands Region of New South Wales. This interview was undertaken early in the research process in order to assess the worth of discussing trails with such people before the process progressed too far and could not be rectified. The initial interview provided enough information to bear out the worth of such interviews.

All interviews were conducted within 15-30 minutes. Transcripts were returned to the interviewees for comment and correction if necessary. The transcripts were prepared and analysed as indicated previously (see section 4.6.2).

The interviews with the ancillary agents completed the third group identified in Figure 4.2 and thus completed the research process as far as the direct contact with the stakeholder groups to be addressed in this research. It remains to analyse and assess the findings established by that data collection and that is taken up in the two following chapters.

4.9 Conclusion

This Methodology chapter has restated the research problem, described the particular trails chosen for this research study on Australian food and wine trails, identified the principal stakeholder groups, given substantive descriptions of them and justified their selection. The chapter then developed the various means by which the stakeholder groups were assessed and described the rationale for such processes. A research framework was put forward which, first, described the peculiar elements of this research topic and, second, outlined the dimensions of the research that made it different and thus determined the approach that would be needed.

These important aspects determined the methodology and research methods chosen which were then presented and described. Essentially, the research framework and methodology needed to enable understanding of the various and potentially disparate stakeholder views

about food and wine trails and the meanings that people ascribe to them. The most relevant research paradigm for this work was determined to be an interpretivist framework, and qualitative methodology. These were introduced and described.

Finally the actual methods of data collection were described for the three different stakeholder groups; trails businesses, tourist-consumers and the ancillary agents. A substantial amount of material was gathered from the three business groups, 175 tourist consumers and 12 ancillary agents. It remains to analyse and assess the findings established by that data collection and that is taken up in the two following chapters; Chapter Five, Findings and Chapter Six, Conclusion.

Chapter Five: Findings

Chapter One: Introduction	5.1 Introduction
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One	5.2 F&WT business findings
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two	5.3 Key factors in trail development
Chapter Four: Research methodology	5.4 Key factors in trail performance
Chapter Five: Findings	5.5 Trail visitors
Chapter Six: Conclusion	5.6 Follow-up telephone interviews
References and Appendices	5.7 Ancillary agents
	5.8 Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

As described in the previous chapter (see Figure 4.2 and section 4.3), the research interviews were undertaken with three groups. They were:

- i. Food and wine trail business operators,
- ii. Food and wine trail tourist-consumers,
- iii. Regional, state and private (ancillary) agencies.

These are the main food and wine stakeholders and their views were essential to developing responses to the research objectives established in Chapter One. As noted in Chapter Four, representatives from each group were interviewed in order to assess their understanding of the factors related to the development and performance of food and wine trails—and so build a cumulative understanding of the phenomenon. As new material emerged it was incorporated into material presented to the next interviewees and/or stakeholder group. The specific research findings for these three groups follow in the order set out above.

Quotations from all of the respondents (by direct personal contact or phone) have been coded using a concept identification method. Respondents were given codes to protect their identities, a point made clear to each respondent prior to interview. Consent forms were utilised and the interview transcripts were sent to the respondents for review prior to embedding quotes in the thesis. Specific codes are as indicated in the table on the following page.

Respondents	Trails
BP: Business Principal	FGT: Farm Gate Trail
T/C: Tourist-consumer	PT: Poachers Trail
AA: Ancillary Agent	BBWT: Barossa Butcher, Baker, Winemaker Trail
	SHT: Southern Highlands Trail

Table 5.1: Codes used in research

5.2 Food and wine trail business findings

Once the two preliminary pilot studies had been completed, semi-structured group interviews were arranged with business representatives on three trails; the Farm Gate Trail in northern Victoria, Poachers Trail in south-east New South Wales and the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail in South Australia. As indicated in Chapter Four, the group interviews with business principals from the Farm Gate Trail and Poachers Trail were conducted first.

Interviews with representatives from the third trail, the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, followed at a later date. This latter process sought confirmation of the information obtained from the first two trails. New material that emerged during the initial interviews was specifically explored with respondents from the Barossa trail. That is, by analysing the data obtained from representatives of each trail prior to conducting the next group interview, additional themes and topics were introduced and discussed with the next group. As it eventuated, the Barossa interviews were one-to-one or, in one case one-to-two, a process that was more useful in confirming the data as it enabled deeper individual consideration.

As will be demonstrated below, business principals on the Farm Gate and Poachers trails validated the observations made in the Literature Review about the development of food and wine trails. They are:

- i. economic change and difficulty that confronts small businesses in rural areas,
- ii. validity of the alternative food network concept,
- iii. importance of economies of scope and synergy,
- iv. success of trail participation in improving business revenue, and the
- v. positive contributions that trails make to local economies.

The Poachers Trail and the Farm Gate Trail are operating in areas outside major food and wine areas; neither are in major tourist zones. The trails are largely composed of small agri-

businesses whose participation in trails is intended to attract people to their venues—and to the region. The principal purpose of trails was to provide another revenue option in difficult economic times.

The third trail, the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail is of a different order. Like the others, it aims to generate revenue for the businesses involved although the problems it purports to solve are different. For unlike the others, the Barossa trail is located in a major tourist destination area. Therefore, the purpose of the trail is not so much about bringing people into the area as it is about moving them around once they are there. The Barossa is a highly competitive tourist region; as one principal said, ‘... we have 60 – 70 cellar doors and 60 – 70 wine labels that don’t have cellar doors. It is phenomenal’ (BP1: BBBWT). The trail augments the visitor numbers that could normally be expected given the pulling power of the region—and the strength of local marketing. It also improves public relations visibility and strengthens brand recognition. The smart-card (see section 4.5.3) also enables feedback on tourist participation.

5.3 Key factors in trail development

In general, and for all businesses on the three trails, changing economic circumstances have been the key drivers. Shifting trade and industry conditions have forced producers to seek revenue from other sources, notably but not exclusively trails and tourism. The data suggest, as will be shown, that such actions have been largely successful. The findings imply, however, that the size of the business, the purpose of its involvement in a food and wine trail and the nature of the trail itself will strongly influence attitudes to participation. As will be seen, small food and wine businesses might depend on the trail to bring custom to their door. To them the outlay of a relatively small amount of money and energy to participate in a trail is justified by the increased business it can generate. Other small businesses might object to increased marketing expenditure for a trail and decide they would be better off spending their marketing dollar elsewhere. Large businesses, for whom trail participation can be a minor part of their overall sales and marketing efforts, can readily justify trail participation. They do so on the basis of the contribution trails can make to sales but also to continuing brand recognition and public relations. All such attitudes were reflected in the findings that follow.

The three trails were different; different places, different histories, different focuses.

Moreover, each of the constituent businesses had individual and unique circumstances.

Hence their stories were varied. In order to summarise this effectively, the analysis of the responses takes a narrative approach. This is based upon five points that were developed through the review of literature and apparent from the findings. They are outlined above (see previous section) as they apply to the initial two trails analysed. Matters of more concern to the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail will then follow.

5.3.1 Impact of economic change

Changing economic circumstances have had a powerful effect. As a winery operator noted when asked why they participated in a food and wine trail:

For us, especially because of the wine glut and how difficult it is to actually sell wine, and how competitive it is using distributors and getting into restaurants. The competition is just so cut-throat, difficult, time-consuming and expensive, that for us it was a logical thing to do (BP1: SHT).

This clearly articulates the difficulties for small wineries as highlighted in the Introduction and in the review of literature (see sections 1.2 and 2.2.3). Winemakers are in an extremely competitive industry; selling their product is highly challenging. The quotation shows that participation in a food and wine trail is a way to maximise product exposure and increase profit margins through encouraging more visitors to the cellar door.

Other economic difficulties were also expressed. The following extended quotation from a food producer on the Farm Gate Trail demonstrates the reality of working within regular food chains. It also illustrates the reasons why alternative market outlets are sought.

Financially, it's better for us. We're only a small operator, If we sold our product to the wholesalers we would lose money. ... Say if we sold it to the wholesaler, OK, all our product? Our orchard produces anything from 1½ – 5 tonnes of [product] from the farm per annum. We also sell honey and other things. So if we sell the [product] to a wholesaler, we are completely at their mercy. They tell us what they will pay us. And they say \$5 - 7 per kilo and think they're doing us a favour. And it costs us \$6.50 to grow it. That's what they pay, they pay us \$5-7 per kilo depending on the season. If we do the value added through the Farm Gate and markets and things we can increase our kilo take, at an absolute minimum to \$16.50, and a maximum of \$67 per kilo (BP1: FGT).

This grower seems to have little choice. The two dominant Australian food chains controlled by two major supermarket groups (see section 2.2.4) contrive to lower returns for growers. Producers are in a difficult but straightforward position; either sell to the chains or find alternative outlets. As this quotation demonstrates, trail participation offers increased financial returns through better profit margins. It thus supports a principal contention put forward by Andrée et al. (2007) in the review of literature; that is, that small commercial

operators get greater financial return from such activity. Economic change has meant businesses have had to seek other economic options, other product outlets. Some of these can definitely be considered alternative food networks, a point reinforced in the next section.

The quotation above also subscribes to the notion of sustainability inasmuch as maximising returns from land means less land is required, and hence less water. Water use is critical in Australia, a drought prone country (see section 1.2).

5.3.2 Alternative food networks

As indicated in the review of literature, alternative food networks include more than trails. In the illustration immediately above, the primary producer concerned participates in farmers markets, another form of alternative food network. The business is not alone in so doing. Another trail food producer when questioned about participation in the local farmers market said, ‘We do that market religiously’ (BP2: SHT). The struggle to maintain business viability, that is, generate sufficient income, means that operators have to use more than one method of marketing their produce and sustain their livelihoods. The returns from wholesale markets are not adequate for some producers and turning to alternative food networks such as farmers markets and food and wine trails provides them with greater returns.

Another point the data reinforce is that alternative food networks are just that, alternative. Producers use commercial as well as alternative markets thus supporting Andréé et al. (2007, p. 3) who claim that, ‘Many farmers also sell into both alternative and conventional supply chains’. Alternative food networks complement mainstream food chains rather than supplant them. The difficulty of selling wine, and the attendant need to increase cellar door sales through an alternative food network such as a trail, was further illustrated by a winery owner who said,

Same with the wine. By the time you take the profit margin off your retailer, and the wholesaler takes 30-35 per cent and the government takes 41 per cent, you still have to pay the government. But you’re at least 50 per cent better off. And I want to increase sales through here (BP2: FGT).

Wineries sell produce in whatever way they can. The winery operator just quoted works through normal wholesale-retail chains but gets a greater return from people buying at the cellar door—hence their involvement in a trail. As indicated in the review of literature, and reinforced by this quotation, many wineries have had to enhance their cellar door visitation. This helps distribute their wine in the absence of other outlets, but also increases their

income through better bottle prices. Broader economic changes have driven producers to seek other outlets; food and wine trails are but one opportunity.

5.3.3 Economies of scope and synergy

As the data in the previous section indicates, producers often employ more than one method of revenue generation. That seems to be the reality of life for the business proprietors involved in these interviews and reinforces the material contained in the review of literature on scope and synergy (see section 2.2.5.1). ‘I see this as another stream to my income. I want to have multiple streams of income’ (BP3: FGT). It does not seem enough to rely on one outlet at a time when international and domestic competition is driving down prices to producers. One small food producer, whose property was used to interview consumers for this research, sold their farm product through a number of means including,

- A large wholesale purchaser of bulk product,
- A commercial distributor who attempted to place the refined product into niche markets,
- An on-farm shop which was advertised as part of a food and wine trail,
- Farmers markets,
- The local café-restaurant they owned and operated,
- A bed and breakfast establishment they ran, and
- Person-to-person contacts with local delis and restaurants that they encouraged and maintained.

This diversity of outlets was necessary because the prices given for bulk milk sales have been driven down due to deregulation (Dobson & Wagner 2000). Thus this one business illustrates the importance of alternative food networks and exemplifies economies of scope and synergy. The proprietors could develop refined retail products from the original bulk product; they were able to develop processed cheese from their bulk milk. They then sold this through various on- and off-farm outlets. Business approaches other than farming-related were also developed; tourism and hospitality were two through their bed and breakfast business and the small local café. They thus capitalised on economies of synergy as well. This one small business demonstrates the lengths that some producers have to go to in order to sustain a livelihood in the food industry. It also supports the comments made early during the piloting of the questions for trail businesses, that working through trails and other AFNs can be very demanding (see section 4.8.1).

5.3.4 Revenue generation

The different food networks used by producers provide different outcomes and represent diverse values, however. For instance, when asked about the difference between wholesale fruit prices and fruit sold through a trail shop outlet, one producer remarked, ‘Oh yeah, when we sell bulk we get about two cents per fruit but when we sell direct we get more like 20 cents and that’s a fair mark-up..... But then again it’s a small quantity’ (BP3: FGT).

For some, participation in a food and wine trail is thus a minor, but still significant, part of their income.

I must say that this is a very small percentage of our business because our main business is truckloads of [fruit], and that’s where we make our money. This is probably five to ten per cent but I must say it is the most enjoyable part of it (BP3: FGT).

For others, it is considerably larger, and critical. ‘I’d estimate that something between about 25-40 per cent turnover potentially should come through the farm gate’ (BP2: SHT). ‘We were already doing [tourism]—but since that brochure came out eighteen months ago, [there has been] about 17.5 per cent increase in our business’ (BP1: FGT). Another respondent said that, ‘Four out of every five customers of mine would be driven by the trail’ (BP2: FGT).

Business principals were not always willing or able to divulge details of their financial situation but their overall responses were positive, if varied. A direct financial benefit was obvious in the quotation used previously which finished by saying, ‘If we do the value added through the [trail] and markets and things we can increase our kilo take, at an absolute minimum to \$16.50, and a maximum of \$67 per kilo’ (BP1: FGT). But the means and the level of success varies. ‘We do survey our customers and I think at one point 11 per cent of our visitation was because of [the] trail’ (BP1: PT). Another replied,

We are able to pin down pretty well where our people come from and it is not a large percentage who will say specifically that I picked up the brochure and I came, but it is a large percentage that know, subliminally, about it. Or they read an article. One article in the SMH [Sydney Morning Herald newspaper] generated 20 per cent of the month’s revenue because of the Trail (BP2: PT).

The commercial success of participation in food and wine trails for some operators is apparent. What is the motivation for businesses whose major revenue is generated through standard food chains? Why do they bother with other options?

Well, there’s a bit of social thing to it. It’s just good talking to people and you have a lot of fun with them. But we also have some sales and we’re developing marmalades and things now, so it’s growing (BP3: FGT).

In this quotation and in the previous reference to working on a trail being ‘the most enjoyable part’ (BP3: FGT) lies a strong implication of embeddedness, a point made in the review of literature (see section 2.2.5.2). Producers get satisfaction from the social interactions inherent in such exchanges. So do consumers, a point that will be reinforced later in this chapter. This quotation also addresses the domestic convention of information exchange and the importance of place rather than the industrial conventions of price and efficiency (see section 2.2.6).

A large wine producer was asked to comment on the point that the winery seemed large enough not to have to participate in a food and wine trail in order to generate revenue. The response was that

There are a lot of visitors that would come to the region and might not know that the Barossa is [our] home. So word-of-mouth referrals from other cellar doors and other businesses are definitely important to us. We want to play a part in the community but we also get a benefit back in that goodwill, we get referrals (BP2: BBB&WT).

For this winery participation in a trail was about public relations and goodwill which also contributed to sales, and hence improved revenue.

5.3.5 Contribution of trails to local economies

The capacity of trails to help sustain individual businesses was acknowledged, as was their contribution to the local economy. This strongly confirms the opinions put forward in the review of literature about the economic importance of trails to local areas. The importance of trails to the local economy was sometimes expressed imprecisely, *viz.*

It’s not always tangible but there is a gut feeling that there is a definite benefit. For argument’s sake, when we have the farmgate open, it’s not unusual to have people ask us to recommend places for lunch, sightseeing things. Even though they may have come to see us as the main purpose of their journey, they’re looking for more than that and that is where the local community definitely picks up some benefit (BP2: SHT).

And again,

I think we have contributed to employment here greatly. In hospitality for a start, but also in viticulture, in employment in the vineyard, irrigation pumps, farm materials, fertilisers, everything we use (BP1: SHT).

Nor did the trail businesses always believe that the effectiveness of such spin-offs were completely understood or appreciated.

And [visitors] put money into the local economy. They go into town and buy things; but they don’t know, they can’t monitor that in town. They don’t know they’re coming from us, that’s a problem (BP2: FGT).

The certainty of their local economic contribution, however, was backed up by firm opinions from other trail operators. Some had developed strong back-linkages to other businesses around their areas. ‘And I have a list of accommodations so ... I’ve got places to send people’ (BP2: FGT). A winery operator who ran a small food outlet on her premises commented on the source of the foodstuffs as small local businesses that benefited from her support and patronage.

It’s close, it’s great food, it’s a great product. ... But now I have the barramundi people, smoked barramundi from the farm, and I have the Polish sausage from the family that makes it ... And I feel legitimate about what I can do and what I can offer. And I have ... raspberry tarts [from another trail producer] (BP1: SHT).

On a larger more regional scale a short dialogue between two business operators illustrates the broader economic clout of trails.

For a recent submission we did, we did some fantastic analyses and the impact is almost scary how much money the trail could be conceivably bringing in. (The lowest estimate was over \$10.8 million) To \$35 million, I mean, we’re talking serious money. This came from research conducted by Tourism NSW. They use multiplier, and direct and indirect employment. They use figures that indicate that for every room that is opened then seven employees are created (BP3 & BP2: PT).

The figures mentioned here are derived from projected accommodation and food outlays, travel costs, souvenirs, incidental expenses and the like.

The foregoing has outlined the responses of trail business participants to the factors that prompted participation in food and wine trails. They are largely economic. Changes to Australia’s economic circumstances as outlined in the review of literature (see Chapter Two in particular) have meant that primary producers, large and small, can no longer rely on regular product markets and traditional sales methods to sell their product and thus earn a livelihood. Food and wine trails have become critical mechanisms for product exposure and sales. Changing demand has also been important, however, and that is taken up later in this chapter.

The previous sections in this chapter have looked at development issues. The next section turns to the factors that business operators believed impact upon the performance of food and wine trails—for businesses and for tourists.

5.4 Key factors in trail performance

The representatives interviewed identified the following aspects as potentially important to the performance of food and wine trails. Particular trails, particular businesses might have

emphasised one or more of these over others. Cross trail findings were not always consistent in that regard. Nevertheless, the following items were identified more than once.

1. Trail coordination; social capital and trust
2. Critical mass; people, product and promotion
3. Variety
4. Experience and stories
5. Tourist readiness and commitment
6. Quality
7. Promotion and theme
8. Agency support and regulation
9. Compliance costs

5.4.1 Trail coordination: social capital and trust

The first point made is that trails need direction or coordination. It is vital for the activities of trails to be drawn together. Decisions have to be made about things such as trail variety, size, structure and theme, for instance. It is necessary to have someone who can either make decisions like those on behalf of the group or contrive to have such decisions made. Not having coordination, not having a means by which such things as corporate values and quality can be understood and shared, presents difficulties. This was obliquely but firmly expressed by one trail business operator who, asked to reflect on the demise of a previous trail to which his business had been attached, said,

We had five farms in the group and three of them wouldn't tidy up, wouldn't lift their game.... wouldn't tidy up their place, they wouldn't present a really nice product, do tours. They wouldn't look presentable when people showed up. And so, in the end, We just backed out of it and said No it's not working (BP1: SHT).

This lack of direction and the apparent lack of a means to resolve the shortcomings led to the demise of this particular trail. The failure to resolve these and other more complex issues was at the heart of problems with other trails as well; notably the wine routes of Parma (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002) and the Waterloo-Wellington Ale Trail in Canada (Plummer, Telfer & Hashimoto 2006) which were discussed in the previous chapter (see section 4.4.1).

Trails are not owned as such. Individual trail businesses are operated separately and the three trails reviewed were collective operations. The collectives were formed either through the interest and enthusiasm of one or more of the business principals (the private approach) or through the effort and endeavour of an external interested party affiliated with tourism (the public approach). The data from this research suggest that either approach relies strongly on the work of one person (see section 3.2). This has strengths and weaknesses. The main strength seems to be the ability of the trail proponent to control all aspects of the trail itself.

When answering the critical question as to how new businesses were to be added to a trail, one of the trail business operators said, without apparent rancour,

Well, there's an autocracy up until now ... and the positive thing about that autocracy is the ability to say Yea or Nay, without that it would not have succeeded. It is as simple as that (BP5: PT).

This quotation underscores the importance of having someone able to control important aspects of the trail; its membership, size and quality, for instance. Such control was considered to be a critical factor. These aspects were generally discussed with colleagues of the coordinator who, most likely because of their affinity with the person and the strength of her social capital, were generally in agreement.

Work in the review of literature suggested that social capital and trust were interwoven (see section 2.3.6). Certainly this research data confirms the importance of trust; the willingness of individual business owners to put the business welfare of others to the forefront in dealing with potential customers. When asked to assess the importance of factors in trail performance, one trail business operator said,

It's trust. It's trust that if I share, there is an element of laying your businesses open to a certain degree, and it's the feeling that if I a going to promote [his] business I am confident that he is not going to slate me. That's something I cannot be confident about in any other organisation (BP3: PT).

This supports the contentions made in the review of literature about the issues of social capital, trust and *animateurs*. Portes (1998) referred to the twin relevance of social capital: its sociability and the use of that sociability in the achievement of ends. Lee put forward the idea that only through networks of social actors can social capital be mobilised. Here there is evidence of the strength of individual social capital and its acceptance by a group who benefit from it. Such people, referred to as *animateurs* by Ray (1999a; 1999b), use their, '... networks, norms and trust [to] facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1993, p. 1).

There are disadvantages in such an approach. For instance, it places an inordinate amount of responsibility on the coordinator, energy spent that may not necessarily be remunerated in any direct way. 'It's left to one person. ... She's not only the main catalyst, she's the main driver' (BP5: PT).

A consequence of this, and the second disadvantage, is that personal problems for the coordinator such as illness or injury can have serious negative affects on a trail. The

importance of the coordination was emphasised in the following comment addressed to a trail coordinator,

There are a lot of very keen and dedicated people around following their own sunset or sunrise or whatever but ultimately ... this seed was nurtured in your mind and the success has been due to [the coordinator's] major influence. I don't know whether anyone would easily step into your place (BP5: PT).

The public approach, whereby a trail is mainly established by a public figure separate from the trail itself, can also focus the coordination of the trail onto one person. After discussing problems such as those above one of the business principals said, 'And that's where [the coordinator] will have to step in' (BP2: FGT). In this case, however, the person nominated did not see themselves as being responsible for the coordination. The decisions were at risk of being deferred. This trail was initiated by a public official who used a grant in order to establish the trail. For whatever reasons the trail business principals were not taking up the coordination. This failure of coordination and a lack of trust evidenced among its members would seem to militate against potential trail success. This was a point made previously (see section 4.4.1). It was also supported by the ancillary agents.

5.4.2 Critical mass: people, product and promotion

A factor described by one trail business principal as 'critical mass' was seen to be important. After being asked a question as to why the business participated in a trail the owner replied,

My original concept was that it was really hard to expect someone to come from Sydney for a weekend just to see me, and I am sure we all felt that individually, but if we grouped together—we all needed each other—we had a critical mass we could all sell that concept to the market and we had more potential to attract people down for a short break (BP3: PT).

Another business principal answered a similar question as follows,

I wanted to have [a trail] because I could see that we had five little wineries locally but it wasn't enough. We have the resort locally and people are coming but they are not always interested in wine. But if you have the selection of Farm Gate ... I had people coming in wanting to buy things off the farmers ... we've got it here, the growers ... it was just a matter of getting it going (BP2: FGT).

Critical mass was never specifically estimated numerically; it was not given a number. The businesses seemed to assume that it equated with 'adequate' or 'necessary'. From these quotations, however, it is possible to interpret critical mass in two ways. One of these, variety, will be taken up in the next section. The other is about getting together a group of businesses large enough to be a drawcard for tourists. The purpose of a trail is, thus, to establish a destination, to give potential tourists enough variety and interest to warrant a visit.

The trail needs to be big enough. For, ‘... the same things with restaurants. People will come if they think, Well, I won’t come down for one fantastic dinner at one restaurant, I’ll come down for three fantastic dinners at three restaurants’ (BP2: PT). This illustrates that the joint presentation of a number of separate businesses becomes seen as a destination in its own right; something that individual operators by themselves would find hard to achieve. Critical mass means going beyond individual businesses to provide a destination experience that is greater than the sum of the parts.

We’re one particular business but the collective ... Trail brand is something that people can identify with and be sure that there is more than one experience, there’s plenty waiting, and as was said earlier, they’re all reasonable organisations working together and they’re all down there waiting for you (BP2: PT).

Critical mass was also seen as important in establishing group clout. Collective size was seen as a means to influence decisions made about trails.

... I think because we’re a strong body now....one person’s not going to do anything....as a team effort [the shire] pay attention, and they are paying attention...and helping a bit... when your positioning something like this [the trail] they say, Right.., it’s income for the Shire (BP2: FGT).

Critical mass is valuable in other ways as well. One of these is promotion. ‘The brochure is the cheapest advertising there is’ (BP1: SHT). Spreading the cost of the production of a brochure around among a number of businesses is effective and efficient advertising. The lessened cost of print material is not the only promotional advantage, however. For while,

... it’s very hard to get a full page promo in the Sydney Morning Herald [newspaper] on a single business or product, but once you’re a trail, a collective, all of a sudden it’s a very interesting thing for journalists to write about (BP1: PT).

A number of business principals commented on the power of a collective entity to draw journalistic interest. And, as was previously noted, journalistic interest results in visitation.

5.4.3 Variety

Variety is connected to critical mass. Variety means having enough different features that people will not become bored or sated visiting the same sort of places, trying the same sort of food and wine. ‘That’s one of our fears too. You can’t have a farmgate trail with just wineries or just.... No... You have to have variety’ (BP1:FGT). Variety was seen to be a positive in that, ‘... now there’s oranges, nuts, nursery... two nurseries, well three nurseries ... fruit trees ... stone fruit ... and all that sort of thing. So you have got to have variety’ (BP1: FGT). On the other hand, the importance of variety derived from the negative. ‘Well

once you've been through a heap of wineries, your palate's jaded, you need a break, and not everyone likes wine' (BP2: FGT).

The concept of variety is capable of being expanded. It is not just an issue of responding to the needs of consumers for a diversity of tastes and flavours. It is a matter of creating a viable destination from a range of scattered small businesses that can have the capacity to attract—and establishing that as different from somewhere else. As one-off producers they can have little impact. A winery owner summed up the dilemma of being in a middle-sized venue this way,

These days we have to offer an experience to differentiate our business from the other 2000 wineries around Australia and so we're fortunate to be part of the ... Trail because we are talking about critical quality of every aspect of it. Fantastic. But now we've found that this idea of offering experience has got to associate with food, accommodation and other fantastic artisan outlets and so forth. Because those 2000 wineries that exist, 1990 of them say, are my size (BP5: PT).

This reflects on another aspect of food and wine trails; that is, they are not limited to food and wine. There was resistance to the idea of one type of product; that a trail is only about wineries, for instance. This is contrary, however, to the existence of specialised trails in Australia and elsewhere. Yet there seems to be little resistance to the idea of trails including other rural, creative, leisure and comfort products. When this occurs, trails appear to be less representative of food and wine and more representative of businesses in the area as a whole.

Variety was also seen to be important within each business as well. One wine grower commented that, 'While their partner is tasting wine they are having a look at the rest of the gourmet produce, reading the Farm Gate brochure or doing something. I'll give them something to read or do ...so you're value-adding' (BP2: FGT). This was reinforced by another producer who said that groups often visited with only one person really interested in the produce,

And then I show them half barrels and how you can have your herb gardens in that and your veggies in that one and you don't need much water and when they see this, the ones that aren't really interested, they start talking and they start getting interested and they're there for half an hour and the other lady who was interested has been right around, she's picked out the plants she wants and has come back, and you've been entertaining the others while she's gone. Otherwise they're just standing there and...[bored] (BP4: FGT).

5.4.4 Experience and stories

That's what were selling, we're selling experience... the product is being sold ...but they're coming for an experience. ... you can't just have wine, you need a story, and they want an interesting stay (BP2: FGT).

This quotation from a winery owner points up a predominant belief about the pertinence of experience. It also reinforces the ideas expressed in the review of literature (see section 2.3.7.1). The interviews with trail principals frequently called attention to the tourist need for an experience. ‘They just want to be given an experience and know that they will get what they are after’ (BP1: PT). ‘We like people to go away thinking that they’ve had a great experience and we see them again in a couple of months time...with more people’ (BP5: PT). Thus experience is instrumental, it is engaged in because it will attract more business. Opinions varied as to what was meant by experience; what was implied by that term. Action and involvement were explicit in statements such as, ‘They just don’t want to go into a shop and buy something. They want to see an operation’ (BP1: FGT). And, ‘Our tour is that we take them for a walk and we’re already mobile, that’s what kids like’ (BP3: FGT). The same operator also saw it as wanting to put, ‘... a small museum on my place. ... I’m third generation and I’d put in some photos and a story’ (BP3: FGT). Yet programs that involved action, that had people engaged in doing physical things, were also seen to be problematic. This was mainly because of insurance requirements that made premiums prohibitive. The following quotation related to public-access picking, or pick-your-own (PYO), on a fruit property sums this up.

No, we haven’t allowed PYO for a few years now. Two main reasons; first, public liability insurance is a really prohibitive, ludicrous, and, two, we had some issues with people consuming more than they were paying for—encouraging kids to wolf down mouthfuls ... all that sort of stuff (BP2: SHT).

But more often than not experience was seen as a need for social interaction, learning and discussion as in,

Again, a lot of it is conversation. People are inquisitive about how [things] grow, the extent of the season. ... I think the main motivation is, I guess, from an educational point of view (BP2: SHT).

Experience was also further defined as, ‘Friendliness, hospitality, making them feel special, education’ (BP2: FGT). The necessity for experience, however interpreted, upholds the ideas put forward by Pine and Gilmore (1999). It also supports the notion that new developments in tourism mean that, ‘Experiencing and learning are at the core of shifting demand’ (Ayala 1995, p. 355). This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

The business principals interviewed assumed that a story was synonymous with tourist experience; that is, an enjoyable experience meant getting the story right, whatever that might be. This belief is also confirmed by Freidberg (2003, p. 4) who said, ‘telling a

compelling story should be the aim of trail developers wanting to attract and satisfy visitors by providing a memorable experience'. It also appears to correspond to what the previous quotations determined as conversation, and education. This is consistent with opinion documented within the review of literature as to the value of stories (see section 2.3.7). A story encapsulates the key elements of the experience. It becomes part of the conversation—and the experience. Asking what the story is seems akin to establishing the venue's point of difference. What makes this orchard different to that orchard? How do their stories differ? Businesses were aware of the need for a story. 'That's what they say is the most important thing about having a farm trail...each [business] has to have a story' (BP1: FGT). Another operator confirmed the value of story through reflecting on her own history as a visitor to vineyards that provided her with memorable experiences; '... there's plenty of people making fantastic wines but when I'm drinking a Rockford or a D'Arenberg with people I always have the story to tell' (BP1: PT). One of the trail operators confirmed this with a very personal illustration;

You need a story. I normally use Dad. ... And people just ...I've been here 46 years and people tell me, Look, your father he spent a whole day with me, and they loved it. So I tell them about his trip to Australia on the ship and how he played with Louis Armstrong...I've got a photo of them playing together...you can't just have wine, you need a story and they want an interesting stay (BP2: FGT).

Again, this supports the work in the Literature Review (Mason & O'Mahony 2007) that elaborates upon the nature of stories and the tourists for whom they are developed.

The responses of the business participants as to the expectations of their visitors were wide and varied. In essence, though, they all seem to support the idea that, 'They want to buy food they can tell a story about' (BP3: SHT). The story, as immediately above, can be about people. This supports the idea in the review of literature (see section 2.3.7) that stories are generally going to be about one of four things; product, process, place or people—or a mix of those.

The distinction drawn in the Literature Review as to the nature and direction of stories being oriented towards the contemporary interests of people was also validated in part. It has been suggested that the culinary tourist could be interested in matters that subdivide into six areas: health, cuisine, lifestyle, regionalism, environment and rurality (Mason & O'Mahony 2007).

The proprietors identified visitor concerns over health, 'It's the nutritional value too. Most supermarket food is going to be at least three weeks, probably six weeks old' and, 'They

need to know they can trust the source of their food' (BP3: FGT). These and similar points were made in the Literature Review (see sections 2.2.6 and 2.2.7). Such comments also implicate environmental matters. Others were identified as being more interested in rural issues, including learning. 'I think adults become conscious of the need to introduce their children to where their food comes from' (BP2: SHT). The concept of rurality was often more direct. 'They want it to be a working farm' (BP1: FGT). Yet it was also couched in nostalgic terms. 'They like to step back in time and remember their childhood' (BP3: FGT). Regionalism was represented in the contribution, 'We do get local people looking for local produce' (BP2: SHT). So was cuisine.

Our food that we cook is from the Italian culture of course. But it's all made from fresh vegetables and virgin olive oil, nothing out of a packet. So when they dine here there's all the flavour experience in the food and they're amazed (BP2: FGT).

And, '... while their partner is tasting wine they are having a look at the rest of the gourmet produce' (BP2: FGT). Lifestyle concerns were indicated through direct reference to such matters. 'They think they're stepping away from stress into a tranquil lifestyle' (BP3: FGT); and, 'They come onto the property and they look at you and think you're part of the sea change' (BP1: FGT).

5.4.5 Tourist readiness and commitment

The issues of experience and story closely relate to another matter raised by the business participants, ie. tourist readiness. Trail businesses saw the need to be ready with positive and worthwhile experiences for visitors. It was not just enough to say that the business was on a trail, and open. It had to be ready and able to provide an experience—and its absence is considered quite problematic as in,

And they said that they visited... drove onto one place... and they said there were people packing and picking but nobody spoke to them....yeah, and the shop was closed and nobody spoke to them (BP4: FGT).

The concept of tourist readiness can also be connected to the awareness expressed in the review of literature that food and wine trails are both marketing devices for products, and tourist enterprises. (This point will also be developed in Chapter Six.) Trails are aimed at both consumers and tourists. This duality, the need for both product and people-centredness, is revealed again in the concern for tourist readiness. In commenting on the possible arrival of overseas visitors to trails, a business operator said, 'But we have to be ready for it, we have to be tourist ready... no way, if we muck up...you have to be right' (BP2: FGT). Tourist

readiness, ‘being right’, appeared to involve a number of elements. They can be categorised under the following three headings; presentation, services, and roads and signs. The divisions between such groupings are somewhat pervious, however.

Presentation issues are perhaps best summed up through a quotation used previously, they, ‘... wouldn’t tidy up their place, they wouldn’t present a really nice product, do tours. They wouldn’t look presentable when people showed up’ (BP1: FGT). ‘They’ being business participants on a now defunct trail. This quotation attests to the idea that property and product have to be accessible, and presentable, and the amenities acceptable. It also rejects the idea that food and wine trails are just a means to exchange products for cash—and reaffirms the need for experience. Presentation can thus mean adherence to local government standards. It also means observance of whatever other additional measures were set by the trail members themselves. Trail business presenters have to be willing and able to provide the experience and the story. They also have to maintain certain standards of personal presentability and conversation skills.

You have to be ambassadors for the region. Your staff have to be ambassadors. If people are sitting in our restaurant having a big leisurely lunch or dinner, they’re going to ask the staff, We’re going to do some wine-tasting tomorrow, where should we go, what should we see? They’ve all got to know, whether they’re just 14 or older. You really have to train your staff (BP1: PT).

Business principals attested to the need for staff commitment to tourism as much as their own. One interviewee confided privately to the researcher that she was concerned about the attitude of a staff member who had come from previous employment where interpersonal pleasantries and congeniality were not encouraged—and the proprietor believed it was showing, negatively. Improving staff performance would take encouragement and training, a matter referred to in the Literature Review (see section 3.3) and taken up further in Chapter Six.

The concept of tourist readiness and commitment was confounded by the notion that food and wine tourists, ‘... expect to be able to get exactly what they want and they don’t realise that farms aren’t like that’ (BP4: FGT). ‘They expect to be able to get that “sit down in Lygon Street, have a coffee, level” down on the farm’ (BP4: FGT). ‘They just want to come in and they want you to pamper them, and they want it to be all nice and good looking’ (BP4: FGT). These quotations, including the allusion to a famous Melbourne gastronomic landmark (Lygon Street) strongly associated with contemporary Italian coffee culture,

underscore the venue and service standards attested to by some operators—and tourist-consumers. They also illustrate the ideas in the review of literature about the ‘new tourist’ (see section 2.2.7). Such a person demands high standards of products and services. The quotations also infer the difficulties that some businesses have in coming to grips with the proposed gap between product sales and tourism. Such difficulties had already led to the demise of a small trail in the area concerned.

One of the specific issues mentioned by more than one of the trail participants was the need to adhere to opening times. All the trails used brochures to advertise their existence and promote tourism on the trail (see Appendix Five). Such publications usually contain details of business opening hours. There was sensitivity expressed by the operators interviewed about trail venues not being open when they said they would. ‘I also think it is important that when people say they are open and operating, that they are open and operating. That makes a ... trail work’ (BP1: SHT). This was expressed more colourfully by another participant who when asked about other trails he had visited said that,

The last one we went to, was actually in the McLaren Vale area and out of five farms you could only get on one...the rest, were just, you know they either had something out the front, an old Volkswagen with some commercial strawberries in it ... and if you go doing things like that it only takes about three or four customers to do that and it will destroy the whole idea (BP1: FGT).

It was surmised that if tourists found businesses closed when they said they would be open, they would not bother to pursue the trail further, or return at all. The other business might then suffer. A number of operators were seen to get around the need to open by operating a self-service mechanism similar to the one parodied above in the reference to an old Volkswagen. This was not believed to be satisfactory. Tourist readiness thus meant a commitment to the other businesses on the trail to be open during the hours agreed upon and to provide an experience—not simply a self-service cart.

The importance of commitment was expressed in other ways.

What happens with this is that there’s an element of trust. You’ve got to make sure you trust that everyone on the trail will do the right thing by each other. And that’s demonstrated time and again, and that is because we have been selective. And we’ve been selective with people who are like-minded and committed to tourism—because not everyone in our business is committed to tourism (BP3: PT).

Previous sections highlighted the need for trails to have some means of coordination and be big enough to sustain a joint tourism operation. The person quoted in this section chose the

word commitment to cover group dedication to factors believed to be essential to trail operation. The ideas contained in the last line of the above quotation seem particularly crucial. Trail membership obliges operators to commit to the demands of tourism. 'People who are doing this for a business seem to be all like-minded' (BP1: PT). This stands in contrast to the last few words in the previous quotation and reflects Beames' (2003) concerns in the review of literature that not everyone in wineries is interested in tourism performativity (see section 3.1.5). The corollary is that trail organisers need to be selective about who participates in such trail businesses. The success of the venture would seem to depend on it. These issues will be taken up further in the next chapter.

The matter of road surfaces was not interpreted consistently by the business principals interviewed. On the one hand, there was some support for the idea that bad road surfaces were off-putting. 'We started up that road but it was too rough and the road's not made and we came back. They've told me that so many times' (BP4: FGT). On the other hand, a proprietor put it more positively suggesting that, 'I think it is all part of the country experience. That's why you come to the country' (BP4: PT). This latter point supports the reference in the review of literature to the trail as a place for adventure. Certainly when road surfaces were an issue they were generally considered a matter for local government.

It's the same where we are but not as bad. Because I got onto the Council pretty quick and they actually came to the party and actually improved it a lot. I said to them, Look, I'm getting two or three buses a week now and if you want to keep people in this area then you'd better look after this bit of road. The bus drivers don't mind but the car drivers do (BP1: FGT).

In supporting the importance of road surfaces one of the participants similarly endorsed the importance of signage. '...so signage, and the condition of the roads is very important too' (BP1: FGT). The importance of signage was indicated in the review of literature (in particular Correia, Ascensão & Charters 2004). Signage was essential and a matter of some concern as to availability and cost. 'You know it took [our business] three years to get those road signs out of the Road Transport Authority. But we have to pay for them. The bureaucracy that goes on' (BP1: SHT). All businesses were road-based and relatively isolated from each other. Signs were thus very important both for the businesses as separate organisations and for the trails. Without signage it would have been impossible for businesses to be found. Yet none of the trails had signage unique to the trails as group entities. To follow them required a brochure map and the ability to identify the locations through general roadside or individual business signs.

5.4.6 Quality

In the review of literature, quality was seen as an inconsistent concept (see section 2.2.6). This attitude was reinforced by trail businesses. Certainly quality related to meeting state standards in health, cleanliness and safety in such matters but, beyond that, there appeared little consistency of understanding. Adherence to the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, was considered to be a minimum requirement to guarantee quality production of food and drink items.

Yet in the interviews with trail participants it was difficult to ascertain what was meant by quality apart from the basic HACCP standard which requires that foods are produced so as not to harm. Quality was believed strongly to be relevant, however. The following are a selection of references to the concept:

... we're fortunate to be part of the ... Trail because we are talking about critical quality of every aspect of it. Fantastic (BP5: PT).
The two things that I think we do well down here are presentation and quality. I think we are strong in both. There are a few exceptions but I think they are in the minority. But dealing with problems in that area is fairly tricky...it would depend on the situation (BP2: SHT).
If you haven't got the quality of product then you really shouldn't be bothered putting it there (BP1: SHT).
Oh yes, and the quality of the experience... if you sell something bad forty people will hear about it.....a good experience they'll tell ten, someone told me that years ago (BP2: FGT).

Attempts to assess definitions of quality during the interviews were generally met with responses that suggested that the word was understood as in,

We're world standard. If you are actually starting to compare us with the world, we are of a very high standard, and we would stand well in any other parts of the world. But we are and we have achieved an extraordinary high level of product and service (BP4: PT).

This would appear to correlate with the consistent idea of advanced attributes alluded to in the literature review. But, more broadly, and in support of Muchnik, Biénabe and Cerdan (2005) in the literature review (see section 2.2.6), it seems apt to suggest that trail quality depends on the criteria chosen, how they are chosen, who does it, how it is guaranteed and how sanctions are brought to bear on those who do not comply.

5.4.7 Promotion and Theme

All of the trails reviewed used a small, fold-out brochure to advertise their existence (see Appendix Five). In this they are consistent with the information in the review of literature which suggests that this is a popular method of promoting trails of all types (see section

3.1.4). The brochures collected for the trails reviewed showed a similar format. They usually featured a location map as well as a short summary of the business names and locations, offerings and opening hours.

The costs of producing such brochures differed slightly in each case. Funding sources also changed over time and various editions of brochures had been supported in different ways. The various sources of funds for brochures were local tourism authorities, local government, state and territory government departments (including tourism) and the trail businesses themselves. The particular mix used reflected the history of the trail, its creation and relationships with other interested agencies. Such connections often appeared to be related to the social capital of the trail's progenitor, that is, his or her ability to use connections and sociability in pursuit of the trail's goals.

Most businesses saw inclusion in a trail brochure as an extremely efficient and effective use of advertising expenditure both for their individual businesses and for the trail overall. Their approbation was usually related to effectiveness and cost, 'And the brochure was cheap. We're only talking about \$80 a pop' (BP3: PT). Critical mass is important in this regard (see section 5.4.2). Trail proponents suggest that it takes a number of businesses to make such an investment worthwhile and relevant.

The utility of the brochure was queried, however.

Personally, I do think that brochures are coming to their end. I think that websites, information from websites are going to be the key in the future, rather than a piece of paper (BP4: PT).

This opinion was contested. Another business principal commented on the evidence from his business for the use of a brochure by saying,

I can see that but the reality is at the moment that when you walk into our place there are brochures beside the door, there are brochures in the room and there's nothing I like more than when I can say, What are you going to do today, what are you interested in, pop the brochure on the table and there is something in their hands, something they can pick up and have a look at (BP2: PT).

The consensus appeared to be developing that internet promotion was necessary in order to attract people to an area. A brochure or some other paper device, however, was seen as necessary to moving people around once they had made their choice and travelled to the region. The consensus was expressed as follows,

I think brochures are important. But I think the main decision about the ... Trail is when they're sitting in their sitting rooms at home and make a

decision to come to the ... Trail. The way we are going to get the brochure into the sitting room is by their computer (BP3: PT).

Individual trail businesses stock brochures and hand them out. The trail used as a pilot for the semi-structured interview format developed for this research obliges participant businesses to deliver brochures to a range of accommodation providers. Each trail has different methods of distribution. They are often disseminated through visitor information centres as they are seen to be important ports-of-call for tourists. Yet such action very much depends on the policies of the individual centres. Criteria for having a brochure included can depend on the distance of the venue or attraction from the particular visitor information centre; some prefer local rather than more distant places. Some visitor centres also charge for placing a brochure into their display racks. Regardless of their method of distribution, brochures are seen as frontline promotion.

The ability to have a brochure displayed in a visitor information centre is different to having the attraction promoted by that agency, however. Often this depends on the familiarity of the staff and management of the centre with the individual business or trail. If the visitor information centre staff is enthusiastic, then they will promote the activity to visitors who ask for recommendations. If they are not, then the activity may well go unheralded. This again seems to depend on the social capital of the proponents and their willingness to use it in the promotion of their businesses, joint and several, to the visitor information centre.

The willingness of businesses on trails to cross promote each other is also important. By handing out trail brochures to visitors and pointing out other places they could visit, individual trail businesses aid each other and the trail in general. This type of assistance becomes common knowledge through being communicated to and by visitors. Cross-promotion thus becomes established as mutual. The interviews with consumers that follow illustrate the power of such action. One couple came upon a trail business while out for a weekend drive and followed it up. '... we started talking to them, and they gave us the Farm Gate Trail brochure' (T/C1: FGT). They had not known about the trail beforehand and visited three businesses on it that day and indicated their willingness to visit more at another time. Such reciprocation seems to rely on the willingness of trail businesses to reinforce each other. If reciprocity wilts, then the willingness to cross-promote each other begins to falter and the trail risks breaking down. This has been illustrated previously by a quotation such as,

It's trust. It's trust that if I share, there is an element of laying your businesses open to a certain degree, and it's the feeling that if I am going to promote [his]

business I am confident that he is not going to slate me. That's something I cannot be confident about in any other organisation (BP3: PT).

The idea of a trail theme seemed important to trail business participants but, nevertheless, did not appear to have been much considered prior to the establishment of the food and wine trails. The Farm Gate Trail was named thus so as to indicate that it was not just about food and wine but would also include other farm-related products as well. So a theme was farm-related variety. The Farm Gate Trail brochure also uses 'Sun Country on the Murray' as a sub-heading which actually confirms the regional destination rather than establish a particular theme of its own for the trail. This most likely reflects the formative influence of the local tourism officer who helped set it up. In relation to themes overall one of the Farm Gate participants suggested, '... I always push the Buy Local idea. Fresh from the Farm Gate. And I use a lot of those ideas in the cooking. Use local produce. Slow Food theme' (BP2: FGT). These are pointers to broader fads in food and wine which might appeal to tourists rather than to any special reference to the local territory.

In response to a question about theme, the Poachers Trail founder said,

And that is what the Poachers Trail is about. "See how this countryside inspires". And that's what it is getting at. (Interviewer: So that would be a theme for this trail?) It is one of the themes, and Living the dreams, Hand-made, Hand-crafted, Face-to face. I read Donna Hay magazines for about three hours and then I wrote the trail brochure. And that was the idea, to come up with that emotive country theme (BP3: PT).

But the idea of a consistent theme shared by all the businesses on this trail was not present, as the following exchange suggests

We are niche products and the theme has to be hand-made, hand-crafted, hand-loved (BP1: PT). What about motivated, passionate? (BP2: PT) But it is all very real. It is not plastic. It is tactile in that they are real people (BP4: PT). And it is geographically comfortable in that it diverse and accessible, we are only half an hour away from Canberra (BP2: PT).

Such discussions confirm Ray's ideas (1998; Ray 2001) about a cultural economy that were expanded upon in the review of literature. He saw the cultural economy as a cultural system and a network of actors that construct a set of resources to be employed in the pursuit of the interests of the territory. The quotation above from the Poachers Trail businesses suggests they are trying to establish the region through cultural resources based on country in order to sell that concept to people outside the area. Regions can be constructed in order to either resurrect or develop economic potential—or simply promote and maintain difference. The area in consideration does not have a strong regional identity and the trail members appear to

be trying to address that although the quoted interactions suggest they have yet to come to grips with that in its entirety.

5.4.8 Agency support and regulation

Food and wine trails do not exist independently of other agencies within the community. As already indicated (see section 5.3.5), there are back-linkages to other community businesses. There are also established relationships with other food networks, standard and alternative. Networks of mutual dependence with other private and government agencies exist. These can include local government and tourism authorities. Connections such as these were investigated in the review of literature and supported in the interviews. A food and wine trail is thus a dynamic construct in continuous interplay between its individual members, the trail collective and the varied and various agencies that both compete and cooperate within the local, state and national food, wine and tourism sectors.

From the standpoint of the business principal interviews, however, most authority was ceded to local government and local and state tourism bodies. Opinions about local government were varied but they generally alluded to the changing nature of local economic circumstances and the necessity for local government authorities to change with them. These issues were canvassed previously (see section 2.2.8). They were summarised in the interviews through comments such as,

And it was hard yards. It was very hard with Council. It has been hard convincing council that it is an OK thing to do. They were very, very backward in looking forward. Very, very difficult indeed. We seem to be over that hump now. They realise the potential, the employment, the benefits that it has brought to the area (BP1: SHT).

Local government help can be important. One of the trails was substantially initiated by the local tourist development officer, a local government employee. The same shire now seems to recognise the necessity to support local economic initiatives of any sort.

[The] Shire, hallelujah, I think because we're a strong body now....one person's not going to do anything....as a team effort they pay attention, and they are paying attention...and helping a bit... when you're positioning something like this [the trail] they say, Right.. it's income for the Shire (BP2: FGT).

But local government contributions are varied. In the aforementioned shire the businesses were able to access local business training through local government. It would seem unlikely, however, that such largesse would be available if the shire was not connected to the

trail through its tourism officer. Again, the social capital of the trail progenitors seems instrumental to accessing other forms of support. This was evidenced strongly elsewhere.

AC Tourism has been extremely supportive, so supportive that they actually asked me to join the board. And I was on that board for a couple of years until I got retrenched along with everyone else when they no longer needed a board. Things changed. ... I have met ... the new GM, and I have good linkages but not as good since they have had changes (BP3: PT).

The area where government can be particularly problematic is with regulation, the by-laws and guidelines established to control public access to properties such as wineries and food suppliers. These differ from state to state and place to place but their importance is illustrated through an interchange which included the following,

[He] was very keen to set up in a property behind us, on a dirt road. There was no way the council was going to let too much traffic on that road. There was no way that he could ever have set anything up out there (BP3: SHT).

And,

But it's not just the road side of things. It's having toilets, disabled toilet facilities, all sorts of stuff. It's hard to know where to begin (BP2: SHT).

Finally,

But it is also to do with RTA [Road Transport Authority] ... They required us to put in a road that would take ten thousand cars a day, and it came off our dirt road and, that was just bureaucracy (BP1: SHT).

Awareness and appreciation of by-laws seems critical to the development of food and wine trails. So does the ability or inability of other agencies to assist in these matters.

I think what does get in the way is the bureaucracy. Here in NSW, in particular, the RTA has been so unhelpful, whereas signage laws in Victoria are just so much better. And the same with liquor laws (BP1: SHT).

Nevertheless, the presence of the economy of synergy introduced in the review of literature was evident. The capacity of food and wine trails to coincide with other local expectations was evidenced in the comment that follows. It refers in particular to the strong support that state and regional tourism agencies can give products that match their own priorities.

But they don't do that because they're benevolent. It is worth remembering that [they] are hungry for new product. If it's a good product and you can give it to them, they'll grab it (BP2: PT).

5.4.9 Compliance costs

Costs were important, but the expense of preparing a tourist property for entry into a trail did not seem to be a major factor—with one exception. Businesses were either willing to fund the adjustments necessary to make their properties amenable to public access or they chose against trail participation. This needs to be seen against the prior commitment of many such

businesses to sell their products through pre-existing cellar doors or farmgate shops.

Businesses were often tourist ready. The decision to participate in a trail did not necessarily add significantly to that expense. Where it did, in the form of a brochure, for instance, the extra cost was usually not considered prohibitive.

Again, the Barossa was an exception to this pattern. This was related largely to a decision made in 2008 by Tourism Barossa to relaunch the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail using an electronic smart card. This meant the purchase of a special credit card machine for each participating business, a cost for training staff as well as annual fees and maintenance. There were also bonuses and special redemptions for tourists who purchased the card which had the potential to cost the businesses money. Barossa Tourism agreed to subsidise the purchase of the credit card machine and associated costs for the first year. After that it would be up to individual businesses. The potential future financial burden was not considered a major impost by larger wineries and food businesses that had significant tourism turnover and sizeable marketing budgets. It was questioned by small wineries who found it difficult to justify the added expense in terms of the limited extra business they believed would be generated. In such cases the added expense had to be balanced against the worth of other marketing initiatives that might bring in more tourists.

5.4.10 Summary

From the interviews with trail business principals the previous ten points were deemed to be critical to their understanding of trail development and performance. Their attitudes were derived from their positions as businesses on trails. The next section will look at the attitudes of tourist-consumers in order to assess what affects trail performance from their standpoint.

5.5 Trail visitors

The overall purpose of the research is to identify and analyse the factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails. Three groups were identified for investigation; first, the business operators; second, trail tourist-consumers and, finally, ancillary agents (refer to Figure 4.2). The previous section detailed the data obtained from the business operators. This section describes data obtained from the tourist-consumers on the food and wine trails. The purpose, in brief, is to present their motivations and expectations. In essence, this is an assessment of performance factors as the responses given by the tourist-consumers show how they react to food and wine trails, that is, how such trails are seen to perform. There is also a discussion of the demographics of the people involved in such tourism.

Material on the venue selection and descriptions of the venues and trails is contained in the first part of this chapter, and in Chapter Four. However, a brief recapitulation on the research venues is presented again. On the Farm Gate Trail in Victoria it was necessary to obtain results at two separate venues; a winery and a cheesery. On the Poachers Trail in New South Wales it was possible to interview visitors at a joint food and wine facility. The results at Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail in South Australia were obtained at two venues; a major winery and a well-known food producer. So the five businesses surveyed are as presented in the following table. The next section contains information on the results of the surveys.

Farm Gate Trail
1. Winery
2. Cheesery (food venue)
Poachers Trail:
3. Composite food and wine venue
Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail
4. Winery
5. Food producer

Table 5.2: Food and wine venues surveyed

5.5.1 Survey results

The survey results are presented in separate sections for each venue. The discussion that follows thereafter incorporates results from all venues. A description of the survey development process and a copy of the survey itself is contained in Appendix Two. Each of the findings from the venues follows a similar pattern based upon the design of the survey form.

5.5.1.1 The winery—Farm Gate Trail

The gender of the survey respondents appeared to be equally divided between male and female. Most visitors came as couples or extended family or friendship groups. There were no single arrivals. Couples usually arrived as one-off pairs but there were those that arrived with other couples or in groups, sometimes in more than one vehicle. Ostensibly, the visitors seemed to divide into two groups; young people in their 20s to 30s, and older folk towards their 50s. This is borne out by the survey results.

The 33 respondents were almost equally divided by gender; 16 males and 17 females. Their home addresses, interpreted from Australian postcodes, were mainly from the State of Victoria. Twenty three of the interviewees came from Melbourne, the state capital, principally from the inner city and eastern metropolitan zones. Another seven said they were from rural Victoria with half of those being drawn from the nearby Shepparton region. (Two people were from New Zealand, on a working holiday, but identified as living locally.) Two people were from Queensland but said they were originally ‘locals’, back for a short holiday. Another visitor was from The Netherlands.

The Easter long weekend period was obviously influential as 16 people said they were on a weekend break and a further eight reported that they were on holiday. The latter could have been referring to Easter as well. There were five people who indicated they were local people and either regular (1) or occasional customers (4). Three other indicated that they were occasional customers but not from the local area; suggesting they were perhaps irregular visitors to the area who had developed a preference for the winery’s products.

No person was unaccompanied. All respondents were travelling with someone else. For 20 this meant travelling with a partner at least. Others, perhaps travelling with a partner, were with family and friends also. There were no business associates indicated and no bus tour groups arrived during the researcher’s stay.

Two thirds of the respondents had travelled up to 50 kilometres to get to the winery. This would be consistent with people either living locally or staying within a relatively short distance of the winery, a point compatible with the area being not too far from prominent holiday areas. The question that asked how many further kilometres would the interviewees travel elicited responses between five and 300. The latter figure would be consistent with a trip to Melbourne although such information is assumed rather than given.

Most of the respondents were married (20) or couples (6). Others were single or separated. A question was asked about lifestage. More than one third (13) were under 35 with no duties as a parent; less than a third (10) indicated that either had no children or that they had left home. The others either had children at home under 15 (3) or who were over 15 (4).

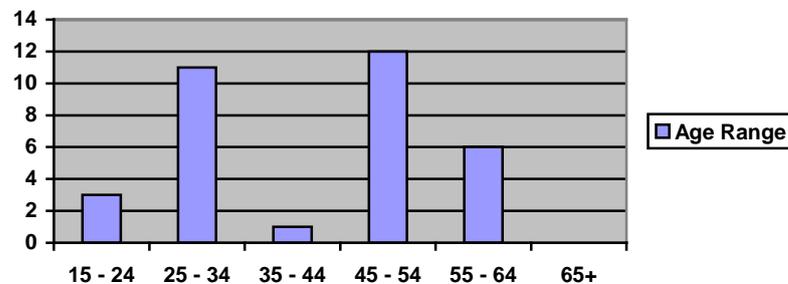


Figure 5.1: Age of respondents: Farm Gate Trail

The relationship and lifestage information appears congruent with the age ranges (see Figure 5.1 above). The ages pivot about the pre-childhood and post-child-caring ages. Three people were under 24. One-third (11) were 25 – 34 years of age. Twelve were between the ages of 45-54 and six, 55-64.

Almost all of these people were in full employment and most were working 35 hours a week or more. Only four said they were not in employment. The occupations of the respondents were varied but mainly professional-managerial. Their work titles include IT consultant (2), lawyer, bank manager, engineer and dentist. There were, however, clerical-reception and service workers as well. While individual incomes were more widely scattered, household income tended to be medium-high. About half of all respondents came from households where the total income was over \$100K. Only seven of the respondents reported household incomes of less than \$50K. The respondents indicated that 14 had university or post-graduate qualifications while 12 had completed secondary schooling or less. The others had certificate or trade qualifications.

The respondents indicated that only four of them were visiting the winery as part of trail visitation more broadly. This is about 12 per cent of all visitations and formed the basis for the follow-up telephone interviews.

The question that asked participants to begin the process of developing relevant consumer factors for trails asked, simply, what they valued in such visits. (See Appendix Two) Twenty seven items were presented for consideration. The respondents were asked to tick as many of the items as they deemed important. The next question asked them to select the five most important points from howsoever many they had chosen in their response to the initial question. Their selections for the first question were as follows. The highest six selections (with 20 or more choices) have been highlighted.

What do you value in such visits?	
An enjoyable; experience	31
Positive interactions with customer service people	19
Food tasting opportunities	19
Meeting people who are welcoming	21
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	17
Regional produce unique to this destination	20
Opportunities for new experience	14
Country visits remind me of my childhood	4
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	15
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	14
Easy roads to get around	5
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	22
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	7
The chance to explore the area	16
Able to access seasonal food	12
Establishing relations of trust with producers	4
Just like to talk about food/wine	10
Wine tasting opportunities	26
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	18
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	6
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	8
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	20
A destination not visited by mass tourists	12
Adequate signage and information	9
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	4
Like to be involved in a participative experience	8
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	9

Table 5.3: What consumers valued in visitation: Farm Gate Trail, winery

The responses to the second question were as follows. These are presented in rank order.

Visit value priorities	
An enjoyable experience	22
Wine tasting opportunities	17
Food tasting opportunities	13
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	11
The chance to explore the area	10
A chance to explore new things about food and wine	10
Buying from the cellar door is cheaper	9
Meeting people who are welcoming	9

Table 5.4: First five factors valued in visitation: Farm Gate Trail, winery

The remaining categories all garnered five or less responses and have been omitted.

A question that attempted to determine the nature of the respondents' visits to the winery was not adequately completed. Three said they were regular local customers and another seven indicated they were occasional local customers. There were no business purchases indicated although that may have been because the visitors were assessed over a long weekend break/holiday break. Five indicated that were 'passing by' or similar while two others said they were on holiday. One person indicated that they were a non-local customer.

The customer intended purchase at the winery ranged from \$30 - \$250 with the median figure being \$50. Their intended purchases for the day were similar.

5.5.1.2 The cheesery—Farm Gate Trail

Sixteen people filled in surveys at the cheesery. There were eight responses from men, eight from women. The results indicated that five were from Melbourne; four were from rural Victoria, six people were from interstate (four from NSW and one each from the Northern Territory and Tasmania). One visitor travelling with Australian friends was from the UK.

Thirteen of the group gave their purpose for being in the area as a holiday and the most frequently mentioned time spent in the area was seven days (6). The remainder were to spend from one (2) to ten (1) days in the area with eight (2) also being close to the most frequently mentioned period.

Only two of the 16 visitors were not travelling with others. People were mainly accompanied by partners and friends. Children were not strongly in evidence. All visitors arrived in cars. One vehicle had travelled 480 kilometres already on that day but the bulk of travel undertaken by visitors to the cheesery was between 10 and 60 kilometres (9).

Seventy five percent of the visitors identified themselves as married and two thirds indicated that that they were of mature age. Some were single (2), others said they were either without children or that they had left home (9). A small group (3) had children aged 15 or under.

Ten of the group gave their age as over 55. The remainder (5) were aged between 25 and 54. Ten of the respondents were not in employment, two of these were looking for work, and the others were retired.

Incomes levels were scattered. Three indicated that their individual income was between \$20K-30K, another three said it was between \$70K-100K. Household incomes were similarly disparate; four were between \$40K-50K and four were over \$70K.

The educational levels as illustrated indicate that this group was generally less formally educated than those at the winery

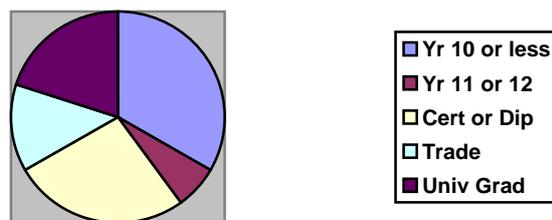


Figure 5.2: Education level of respondents: Farm Gate Trail, Cheesery

Of the travellers surveyed four (25%) of them suggested that they were travelling on the trail and going to visit other businesses as well. When asked to indicate what they valued with such visitation, their selections were as follows. The highest six selections (with 10 or more choices) have been highlighted.

What do you value in such visits?	
An enjoyable experience	14
Positive interactions with customer service people	8
Food tasting opportunities	13
Meeting people who are welcoming	10
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	4
Regional produce unique to this destination	12
Opportunities for new experience	7
Country visits remind me of my childhood	1
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	4
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	8
Easy roads to get around	7
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	12
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	1
The chance to explore the area	11
Able to access seasonal food	7
Establishing relations of trust with producers	0
Just like to talk about food/wine	4
Wine tasting opportunities	4
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	1
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	1
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	1
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	9
A destination not visited by mass tourists	6
Adequate signage and information	8
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	8
Like to be involved in a participative experience	4
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	3

Table 5.5: What consumers valued in visitation: Farm Gate Trail, food venue

The question that asked the respondents to prioritise the previous selections was answered as follows. The responses are presented in rank order. The remaining categories all garnered five or less responses and have been omitted. These findings will be pursued later in this chapter.

Visit value priorities	
An enjoyable experience	10
Food tasting opportunities	7
Regional produce unique to this destination	6
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	6
The chance to explore the area	6

Table 5.6: First five factors valued in visitation: Farm Gate Trail, food venue

Half of the respondents said they would spend between \$10-\$50 at the cheesery. Thirty dollars was the median figure. Total expenditure for the day began at \$10, but three people said they would spend over \$100 while they were in the area.

5.5.1.3 Winery, meat producer, café—Poachers Trail

Thirty-two women returned a survey as did 21 men. This finding coincided with the researcher's personal assessment that there were more women in attendance during the periods reviewed. With the exception of two bike riders who did not fill in a survey, all the respondents arrived by car. It is in no way a walk-in venue. Some arrived in groups but most as couples. There were very few children to be seen despite the fact that it was a national holiday weekend.

About one third of the visitors were from Canberra. The remainder chiefly came from New South Wales, most locally, although nine were from other states, mainly Victoria and Queensland, and there was one Canadian visitor. This was supported by further figures which suggested that about half of the group were local people on an occasional or regular visit. The visitors came in pairs or groups, a number in partner or spouse dyads but often with other family members and friends as well.

The people surveyed were largely professionals. Ten of the group indicated they were public servants. It is possible that a significant portion of those who responded that their jobs were as a manager and information technology developer could have been in the public sector as well. There were few tradespeople or office workers although two said they were self-employed and, thus, their particular employment type was hard to determine.

The median kilometre distance travelled to access the venue was 30, making most visits consistent with travel from Canberra and surrounds. The total kilometre estimates for the day's travel ranged from 60 (a return trip to Canberra for some 16 of the respondents) to 600; a journey which could have taken the visitor well into Victoria or significantly north into New South Wales although that is unknown. The remaining kilometre estimates suggested that many of the visitors were planning to drive a little further around New South Wales and/or the Australian Capital Territory before returning home. This would be consistent with visiting other wineries and food outlets in the area or travelling further on the Poachers Trail.

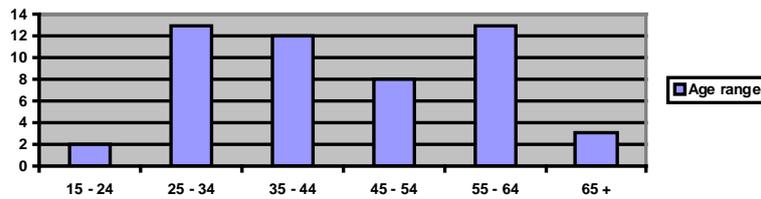


Figure 5.3: Age range of respondents: Poachers Trail

The age range as shown in Figure 5.3 was somewhat bipolar with younger and older people being well-represented.

About 20 per cent of the respondents identified themselves as single, the remainder were married or living as a couple. Over half of the respondents were mature age people (over 35), some single but most were childfree or childless couples. The other significant group was of young people (under 35), living alone, sharing or living with parents.

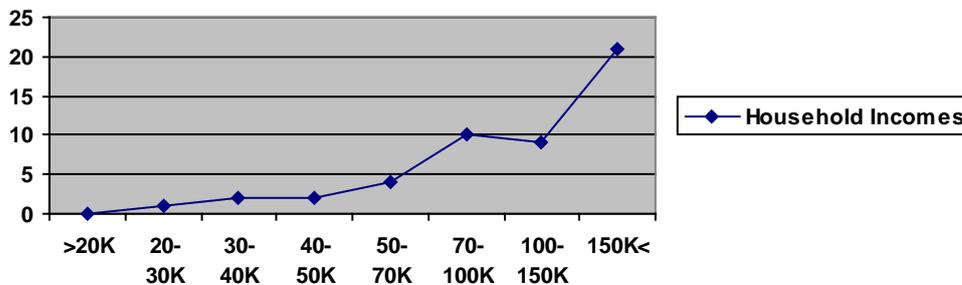


Figure 5.4: Income of respondents: Poachers Trail

Twenty per cent of the respondents as indicated by Figure 5.4, said that they were on individual incomes below \$50K. The remainder were on incomes above that and, of that group, 20 per cent said they were on individual incomes of \$100K or more. When total household incomes were considered over half of the surveyed group were in households of \$100K or more. Slightly less than half the total group respondents were in households where the income was over \$150K.

Thirty of the respondents were university graduates. Half of that number had post-graduate qualifications. Eight people had been educated to diploma or certificate level and the others had all completed some secondary education.

Most of the respondents were employed and in full-time employment. Only five were not in employment of which three were retired, one a student and one did not answer.

The question as to what the visitors valued in visits to such businesses elicited the following information. Responses numbering 30 or more have been emphasised.

What do you value in such visits?	
An enjoyable; experience	51
Positive interactions with customer service people	24
Food tasting opportunities	48
Meeting people who are welcoming	23
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	17
Regional produce unique to this destination	35
Opportunities for new experience	30
Country visits remind me of my childhood	7
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	21
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	24
Easy roads to get around	10
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	13
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	14
The chance to explore the area	32
Able to access seasonal food	24
Establishing relations of trust with producers	2
Just like to talk about food/wine	17
Wine tasting opportunities	29
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	7
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	11
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	8
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	27
A destination not visited by mass tourists	33
Adequate signage and information	15
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	3
Like to be involved in a participative experience	10
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	10

Figure 5.7
What consumers
valued in
visitation:
Poachers Trail

When asked to stipulate which five of the values indicated above were of most importance the respondents specified as follows. The six most important have been emphasised.

Visit value priorities	
An enjoyable experience	35
Positive interactions with customer service people	7
Food tasting opportunities	33
Meeting people who are welcoming	7
Regional produce unique to this destination	17
Opportunities for new experience	8
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	9
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	6
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	8
The chance to explore the area	20
Ability to access seasonal food	7
Wine tasting opportunities	16
A destination not visited by mass tourists	16

Table 5.8: Five
factors valued in
visitation:
Poachers Trail

All figures that generated five responses or less for the previous question were omitted.

When asked to indicate how they categorised themselves, if they were not to visit other businesses on the Poachers Trail, 15 respondents indicated they were tourist/visitors and a further 15 considered themselves as regular or casual local customers.

The median purchase figure for the venue was \$50 while the top was \$200 and the lowest \$10. Two of the respondents said that money was no object.

5.5.1.4 Food producer—Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail

Twenty women and seven men returned the survey. This figure supported the researcher's assessment that there were considerably more women than men at the venue. All visitors arrived by motor vehicle. The venue is removed from the main towns of the Barossa Valley and hence only accessible by road. Some respondents came in groups, others in couples. One person came alone. There were no children present at all.

Ten people indicated that they were international visitors. They were from Japan (3), Great Britain (3), Ireland (1), New Zealand (1), Canada (1) and the USA (1). Six visitors were from South Australia. The remaining eleven were from other states including Western Australia (2), Queensland (2), Victoria (4) and New South Wales (3). This confirms Barossa's reputation and branding as a national and international visitor destination.

Fifteen of the visitors indicated that they were on holiday and two indicated they were long-term travellers. Of the remaining ten, three were on a short break, four were occasional customers, two indicated they were at a conference and one was in the area for a wedding.

In response to the question about visit length the median stay indicated was one day. The next most popular choice was two days. This is consistent with the Barossa's reputation as either an overnight destination or a day trip from Adelaide. This was confirmed by data about distances travelled to get to the area. Forty per cent of travellers indicated that they had travelled between 60 – 80 kilometres, a figure consistent with a trip from Adelaide.

The bipolar nature of this age range is similar to other venues. The lifestages were strongly oriented towards people under 35 living alone or sharing (7), single people over 35 (6) and mature couples without children or whose children had left home (10).

Two thirds of the respondents were in paid work, mainly full-time. Consistent with the eleven people who were 55 or older, a number of the respondents (7) indicated they were

retired. The median income level for households was \$50K - 70K. Few low level household incomes were indicated.

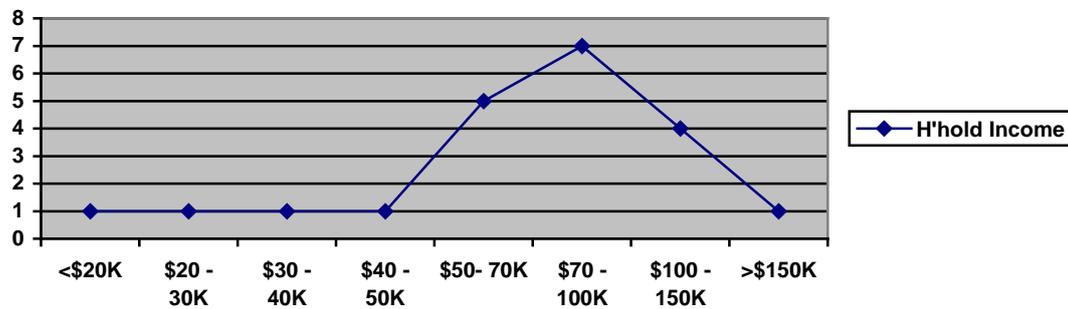


Figure 5.5: Income of respondents: Barossa Butcher, Baker Winemaker Trail, food venue

When it came to educational levels the pattern was consistent with previous venues. Figure 5.16 shows respondents were generally well-educated. Sixteen people had tertiary level qualifications and eleven of that number were to post-graduate level. Of the others all but one had completed secondary schooling or obtained certificate, diploma or trade qualifications.

Of the 27 respondents only one indicated that he or she was participating in the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. They had found out about the trail through reading an article about it. Their motivation for undertaking the visit apart from an interest in food was to see and understand more about the region and its cuisine.

The response to the question on visitor values was as follows. They are laid out in the order presented in the survey. Responses numbering 15 or more have been emphasised.

What do you value in such visits?	
An enjoyable experience	26
Positive interactions with customer service people	12
Food tasting opportunities	21
Meeting people who are welcoming	15
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	12
Regional produce unique to this destination	17
Opportunities for new experience	13
Country visits remind me of my childhood	4
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	5
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	13
Easy roads to get around	6
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	12
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	8
The chance to explore the area	16
Able to access seasonal food	12
Establishing relations of trust with producers	3
Just like to talk about food/wine	9
Wine tasting opportunities	19
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	2
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	7
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	6
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	15
A destination not visited by mass tourists	4
Adequate signage and information	5
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	7
Like to be involved in a participative experience	2
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	3

Table 5.9:
What consumers valued in: Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, food venue

When asked to stipulate which five factors they considered to be of most importance the respondents specified as follows. The responses are in rank order. Those of five choices or over have been emphasised. All responses numbering three or less were omitted.

Visit value priorities	
An enjoyable experience.	14
Wine tasting opportunities.	12
The chance to explore the area.	9
A chance to learn new things about food/wine.	9
Food tasting opportunities.	7
Ability to access seasonal food	5
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	4
Regional produce unique to this destination	4
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	4

Table 5.10: Five factors valued in visitation: Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, food venue

Most respondents (14) categorised themselves as tourist/visitor although this question on the form was not universally completed. Twenty two of the respondents indicated that they were

prepared to spend money at the venue. The figures ranged from \$5 to \$1000. The average amount was \$160 and the median figure \$100.

5.5.1.5 Wine producer—Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail

The respondents who filled in surveys at the Barossa winery were almost evenly split between male (22) and female (24). Their places of origin as determined by postcodes were diverse. All states of Australia were represented. The greatest number of visitors was from South Australia (15). However New South Wales (4), Western Australia (9), Queensland (8) and Victoria (4) were well-represented. A Tasmanian couple also visited. Four international visitors were present, two from Great Britain, one from New Zealand and one from South Africa. The widespread origins of visitors as shown in Figure 5.6 supports the reputation of the Barossa as a national and international destination.

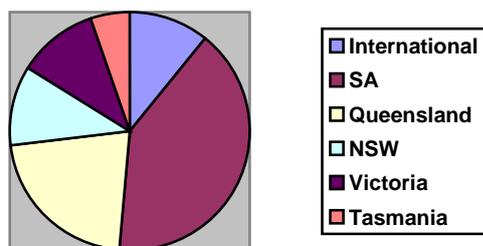


Figure 5.6: Origin of respondents: Barossa Butcher, Baker Winemaker Trail, wine venue

All visitors came in motor vehicles. Most came as couples or family and friendship groups. A small number of school-age visitors was noted. The period used for survey collection coincided with school holidays in some states.

About three quarters of the respondents indicated that they were either on holiday (28) or taking a short break (6). The response to the question about length of stay in the area gave the median length of stay as one (13) or two (13) days. The common brevity of stay—a day trip or overnight—was supported by the next most popular choices for length of stay as either three (7) or four (5) days. The majority of visitors were travelling with partner or spouse (21) but visiting with friends (9) and family (12) or both were common options too.

The distances driven to the destination on the day were consistent with people visiting from Adelaide or staying locally. If 60 k is taken as a mean distance from the various suburbs of Adelaide to the Barossa then about one third of the respondents had driven from the state

capital. A quarter of the respondents gave driving figures consistent with local origin. Thirty five of the respondents said they were married or living as a couple.

The somewhat bipolar age range is not dissimilar to patterns found at other venues. However, in this case, the number of older respondents is somewhat unusual. The figure is supported by further statistics which suggest that eleven of the respondents were either retired or semi-retired. When asked to indicate life-stage, eleven of the respondents indicated that they were under the age of 35 and either living alone or sharing. Three said they were living as a couple but with no children. At the other end of the scale, however, a large group of respondents indicated that they were either over 35 and single (5) or a mature-age couple with no children or whose children had left home (15).

Two thirds of the respondents were either in full- or part-time employment. As indicated, some had retired. Given occupations were quite varied and included such work areas as cardiac science, farming, journalism and retail sales. Individual annual incomes were arranged in a skewed bell curve with the bulk of them (20) being in the range of \$40K – 70K. Annual household incomes were more arranged towards the high end and as follows.

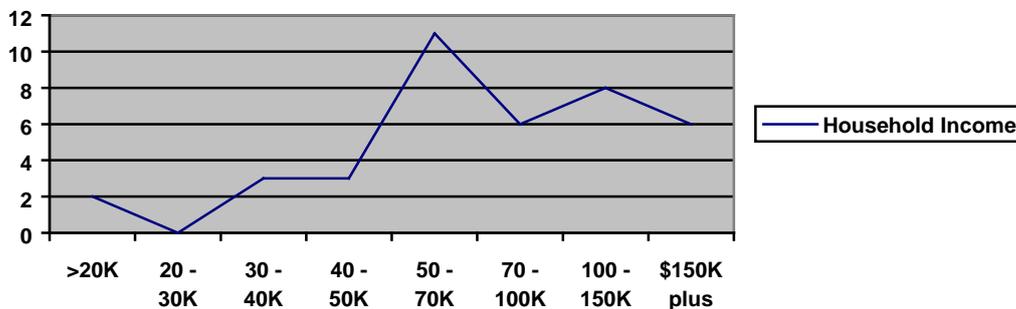


Figure 5.7: Income of respondents: Barossa Butcher, Baker Winemaker Trail, wine venue

Educational levels indicated an apparent bias towards tertiary qualifications—but not to the same extent as other venues. Fourteen of the respondents had university qualifications, six of those post-graduate.

Only six of the respondents indicated that they were visiting the venue as part of broader visitation to the trail.

The question that asked respondents to indicate the values they gave to such visitation was answered as follows. Responses over 20 have been emphasised. The responses are in the order laid out in the survey.

What do you value in such visits?	
An enjoyable experience	44
Positive interactions with customer service people	21
Food tasting opportunities	19
Meeting people who are welcoming	27
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	27
Regional produce unique to this destination	21
Opportunities for new experience	21
Country visits remind me of my childhood	5
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	9
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	16
Easy roads to get around	20
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	16
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	10
The chance to explore the area	28
Able to access seasonal food	11
Establishing relations of trust with producers	1
Just like to talk about food/wine	16
Wine tasting opportunities	19
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	9
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	9
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	13
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	30
A destination not visited by mass tourists	13
Adequate signage and information	12
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	7
Like to be involved in a participative experience	3
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	3

Table 5.11: What consumers valued in visitation: Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, wine venue

The ranking of such values is presented in order as follows. Responses over 15 have been emphasised. The excluded categories all garnered less than five choices.

Visit value priorities	
An enjoyable experience.	36
A chance to learn new things about food/wine.	20
The chance to explore the area	20
Wine tasting opportunities	18
Meeting people who are welcoming	17
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	13
Food tasting opportunities	13
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	9
Easy roads to get around.	7
Opportunities for new experience.	7
Regional produce unique to this destination	6
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money.	6
Just like to talk about food and wine	5
A destination not visited by mass tourists.	5
Adequate signage and information.	5

Table 5.12: Five factors valued in visitation: Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, wine venue

When asked to categorise the purpose of their visit to the winery, 24 people said they were tourist/visitors. When asked to indicate how much they might spend at the winery, figures ranged from nought to \$300. The median figure was \$20, the mean was \$75. The question that asked how much visitors might spend while at other food and wine businesses in the area was not filled in as comprehensively as the previous category. The figures ranged between nought and \$500. The median figure given was \$100. The average expenditure proposed was \$120.

5.6 Follow-up of telephone interviews

A principal purpose of the survey was to generate visitor opinion about food and wine trails. A second purpose was to assess visitor profiles and see whether they conformed to what is already known about food and wine tourists. The analysis and discussion that follows incorporates material from all the venues. The quotations are derived from the 20 people who were selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews as a result of putting their names down on the survey form as willing to be interviewed. Where appropriate, differences between the venues are noted. Visitor profiles will be discussed first, visitor opinions will follow. Some summary comment on the phone interviewees follows immediately.

The people who agreed to participate in phone interviews were a relevant sample of the interviewee group overall. There were people of both genders and of all ages. There were younger and older, some were travellers from a distance, others were closer to home. They represented the principal tourist dynamics of their trail areas particularly well. The Farm Gate Trail interviewees included people who had stayed at the local timeshare, a dominant

accommodation venue in the area. There were also people who were drawn to the region because of the presence of the Murray River and its holiday potential. On the Poachers Trail the interviewees included men and women from outside the Canberra area who were there on holidays for shorter and longer periods and saw the trail as a means to an enjoyable experience. Some journeyed the trail by themselves; others came with local friends and relatives. On the Barossa trail there were representation of people, based in Adelaide, who were in the Barossa area as day trippers. There were also people from all over Australia, and elsewhere, who were vacationing across Australia and visited the area because of its predominance as a tourist destination. The 20 people interviewed were a sound sample of the interviewees overall..

5.6.1 Visitor profiles

Much of the demographic data coincides with the results generated by Sparks et al (2005) on good living tourism. For instance, the age groupings, joint household income figures, marital status, occupational types and education levels identified previously were generally consistent with those findings. Another example of consistency involves the South Australian Tourist Commission (SATC 1997) which once proposed that wine tourism was principally undertaken by couples with no children, tertiary education and higher professional incomes. Little of that is gainsaid here and does not contradict other viewpoints expressed elsewhere (Dodd & Bigotte 1997; Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu & Haydam 2004). The tourists were often childless (or childfree) couples at either end of the child-rearing continuum. One group was largely prior to the commencement age for child-rearing. The other group mainly comprised people who were either childless or whose children had left home.

Some inconsistencies are noteworthy, however. The first is with the cheesery on the Farm Gate Trail, the second with the Poachers venue. Visitor profiles for the cheesery indicate that six were from interstate and most of the respondents (13) were in the area for a holiday, a week or more being common. They were also older. This is consistent with the cheesery being in an area that contains a major holiday venue, a timeshare resort in the nearby rural town of Numurkah. The timeshare resort is part of a group of such vacation spots around Australia. It enables people to use up holiday time allocations, a week being a common time period. Preferential rates for a week's stay at such places in 2008 ranged from A\$90 – A\$200 for two couples in twin suites. These rates are particularly attractive for people and families

on relatively low or fixed incomes (such as retirees and pensioners) but who wish to travel and see different places nonetheless. The cheesery and the Farm Gate Trail are promoted as two of the things to do for visitors at the resort. As most people travel to Numurkah in their own vehicles, a trip around venues on the Farm Gate Trail is seen as an attractive day out.

A principal distinguishing feature of the respondent group at the Poachers Trail venue was an even higher average income and a greater level of education. This is not surprising, however, given the location of the venue and its nature. It is within short driving distance of Canberra, home to a significant portion of the Commonwealth of Australia public sector. The latter is a generally well-remunerated professional group. Almost 20 per cent of the people surveyed identified themselves as public servants. A significant percentage of the others with different professional identities could well have been engaged with this sector as well.

Canberra is recognised as having generally higher income levels than other cities (ABS 2005). 'The average mean national gross weekly income for 2003–04 was \$1,128. Average household income levels in the ACT and NT were the highest in Australia at around \$1,400 a week' (ABS 2005, p. 1). Even so, the percentage of individuals with household incomes of over \$150K shown here seems high. Educational attainment within state and federal public sectors is also advanced. The Commonwealth Public Service takes in a group of new graduates every year from universities around the country. Further educational attainment for this group is encouraged, and rewarded.

5.6.2 Visitor opinions

The respondents were asked to tick as many points as they felt appropriate to explain what they found particularly valuable in visits to food and wine businesses. Their most frequent responses in order of presentation on the survey were as follows. The principal responses (over 90 choices) are emphasised. The table is laid out in the manner the items were laid out in the survey.

What do you value in such visits?	FG- W	FG- C	P	BT- F	BT- W	Total/
An enjoyable experience	31	14	51	26	44	166
Positive interactions with customer service people	19	8	24	12	21	84
Food tasting opportunities	19	13	48	21	19	120
Meeting people who are welcoming	21	10	23	15	27	96
Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends	17	4	17	12	27	77
Regional produce unique to this destination	20	12	35	17	21	115
Opportunities for new experience	14	7	30	13	21	85
Country visits remind me of my childhood	0	1	7	4	5	17
Freshness and quality not available elsewhere	15	4	21	5	9	54
Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce	14	8	24	13	16	75
Easy roads to get around	0	7	10	6	20	43
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	22	12	13	12	16	73
Opportunity to get in touch with nature	0	1	14	8	10	33
The chance to explore the area	16	11	34	16	28	105
Able to access seasonal food	12	7	24	12	11	66
Establishing relations of trust with producers	0	0	2	3	1	6
Just like to talk about food/wine	10	4	17	9	16	56
Wine tasting opportunities	26	4	29	19	19	97
Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	18	1	7	2	9	37
Chance to consume/purchase safe produce	0	1	11	7	9	28
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money	0	1	8	6	13	28
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	20	9	27	15	30	121
A destination not visited by mass tourists	12	6	33	4	13	68
Adequate signage and information	0	8	15	5	12	40
Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle	0	4	3	7	7	21
Like to be involved in participative experience	0	4	10	2	3	19
Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities	0	3	10	3	3	19

Table 5.13: What consumers valued in visitation: all venues

The prioritised five values were as follows. The first five are emphasised.

Visit Value Priorities	FG- W	FG- C	P	BT- F	BT- W	Total
An enjoyable experience	22	10	35	14	36	117
Food tasting opportunities	13	7	33	7	13	73
Chance to explore the area	10	6	20	9	20	65
Opportunities for new experience.	17		16	13	18	64
A chance to learn new things about food/wine	10			9	20	39
Regional produce unique to this destination		6	17		6	29
Meeting people who are welcoming	9				17	26
Talking with the food/wine grower and staff	11	6			9	26
A destination not visited by mass tourists			16		5	21
Gain knowledge I can share with friends					13	13

Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper	9					9
Opportunities for new experience					7	7
Easy road to get around					7	7
Just like to talk about food and wine					5	5
Adequate signage and information					5	5
An experience that will not cost me a lot of money					6	6

Table 5.14: Five factors valued in visitation: all venues

Legend: **FG-W** Farm Gate Trail Winery
 FG-C Farm Gate Trail Cheesery
 P Poachers Trail Venue
 BT-F Barossa Butcher, Baker, Winemaker Trail Food venue
 BT-W Barossa Butcher, Baker, Winemaker Trail Wine venue

In order to examine this further, to extract more content from the data, it was necessary to probe it further. In Chapter Four, and further developed in Appendices One and Two, sub-headings were established under which the 27 suggestions put to tourist-consumers were subsumed. These were derived from chapters Two and Three of the Literature Review. The following sub-headings were established.

1. The type of experience
2. Importance of food and wine tasting
3. Nature of the relationships between visitors, producers and staff
4. Interest in healthy, safe, seasonal and sustainable foods
5. Impact of rurality and regions
6. Learning, education and information
7. The nature of trail tourism
8. Tourist transactions
9. Roads and signage

The 27 suggestions were subsumed under these nine sub-headings. Not all of the sub-headings had equal numbers attributed to them, however. A direct comparison between sub-headings based on the number of choices among them was not possible, therefore, as the raw figures were not comparable. Using just simple percentages, however, it is possible to contrast the change in choices of the tourist-consumers as they selected the most relevant five from the ones originally chosen from 27. The intent of asking the tourist-consumers to make two choices; first to choose from the original 27 suggestions and then to determine the most important five, was aimed at concentrating the choice. The method required the respondents to think quite carefully about their choices and thus their responses could be deemed more reliable. Table 5.15 provides a summary of the tourist-consumer preferences overall—and their comparative strengths when the respondents were asked to prioritise five from a group of 27.

% of value choices overall	Value statement sub-headings	% of value statements from five
15.4	The type of experience	24.2
12.4	Importance of food and wine tasting	26.7
13.9	Nature of the relationships between visitors, producers and staff	6.1
20.4	Interest in healthy, safe, seasonal and sustainable foods	5.6
4.0	Impact of rurality and regions	0.2
15.5	Learning, education and information	15.3
9.9	The nature of trail tourism	16.7
3.7	Tourist transactions	2.9
4.7	Roads and signage	2.2
Total 99.9		Total 99.9

Table 5.15: Tourist-consumer value preferences

This analysis does not obviate the need to compare and/or contrast particular values, and they will be further considered as and when appropriate. What the table does demonstrate, however, is the particular importance of a number of the major sub-headings; namely, the type of experience, food and wine tasting, learning, education and information, and the nature of trail tourism. The categories of rurality and region, the nature of tourist transactions and roads and signage were not endorsed as strongly as those presented in the preceding sentence. They were even less important when the participants were asked to rank five. The two sub-heading that incorporated values relating to the nature of relationships between visitors, producer and staff and interest in healthy, safe, seasonal and sustainable foods were not as strongly endorsed in the final five as they were in the original 27 but they did maintain some importance nevertheless. In the latter two there were two values that stood out and they will be considered at a later point.

The five points stressed by the tourist-consumers in Table 5.14 became the material base for discussion in the intensive phone semi-structured interviews. They were pursued so as to develop greater depth of understanding of the issues. The reasons for the inclusion of these issues, and their relevance will be considered after a brief recapitulation of the telephone interview process and a summary description of the phone respondents.

The process for telephone interviewing was described in section 4.8.2.2. Names and contact details of 20 people willing to participate in telephone interviews were garnered from an information box on the last page of the survey that was handed out at each venue. (A copy of the survey and the explanation for its development is contained in Appendix Two.) Where possible, the agreeable participants were contacted within a week of their attendance at the particular venue and asked if they were still willing to be involved in a further phone conversation. If so, the purpose of the research was explained to them again and the nature of their commitment outlined. Basically, this meant a further 20-30 minute telephone conversation at a time of their choosing which would be recorded with their approval. Participants were informed that the process would largely involve a discussion on the issues they had ticked as important on the survey. This approach added much greater depth of understanding to the survey process. The respondents were followed up at the time they suggested, usually within another week. The content of the conversation followed the issues they had ticked as important and probed further as to why they had chosen those particular issues and what they meant to them. Other data pertinent to the research was sought as the conversation progressed thus providing rich, deep and comprehensive material that added substantially to the information contained in the surveys. The text of the conversation was typed up and returned to the respondents and they were encouraged to modify or add to the responses as appropriate.

The respondents were a diverse group; men, women, young and old. The youngest was a young mother in her early 20s, the oldest a retired couple in their 70s. They were similarly of a diverse income range and educational level. The one thing that did unite them was an interest in food and wine although that, too, was difficult to categorise as very few would identify themselves as a foodie, a point expanded upon in the next section. Food and wine were a means to an enjoyable day out. For the young mother, food was about nutrition, health and safety and she was interested in visiting places in order to expand her knowledge and experience. The older couple came from an era of food self-provision. They were interested in food from any number of aspects and they were interested to talk about as part of their holiday experiences. It was what helped make their vacation time enjoyable.

5.6.2.1 Experience

The first of the values, ‘an enjoyable experience’, was included in order to probe the importance of the experience economy. Its importance was also flagged by the business

principals, ‘That’s what we’re selling; we’re selling experience..... the product is being sold ...but they’re coming for an experience’ (BP1: SHT). This suggests that visitors are looking for something memorable—an encounter, service or practice—they can take with them as either memory or artefact. That experience was by far the most important value ascribed to by the respondents underscores the importance of Pine and Gilmore’s concepts (Pine & Gilmore 1999). What it does not identify is just what is meant by an enjoyable experience. The term is subjective and may encompass a range of views, contexts and dimensions. For these reasons the surveys were followed up in greater depth during the telephone interviews. Enjoyable experience was paramount in the responses from all venues. How such an idea is interpreted was consistently, if diversely, expressed by a number of the phone respondents. Some saw it as eminently social. ‘It is about meeting people and having a chance to have a chat with them as well’ (T/C2: FGT). And,

Basically [it] is a good day out and that depends on the people you’re with, the overall experience, and I think the people you meet along the way make it better ... just friendly, and they were willing to share what they knew about their produce or product (T/C3: FGT).

The two foregoing responses, however, begin to implicate other issues and motivations, in particular the idea of learning. It means,

... meeting the people that are involved in the processes. ... I go to places like that because I like to meet the people, particularly when they know a lot about, and are passionate about, what they do (T/C1: FGT).

These responses reinforce the value of positive interpersonal interactions—interwoven with ideas of knowledgeable discussion, enthusiasm for product, sociability, learning and sharing. Some of the issues identified as important on the survey are obviously interlinked. An ‘enjoyable experience’ is thus associated with ‘Talking with the food/wine grower and staff’, and ‘Meeting people who are welcoming’. It is also linked with the ‘Chance to learn new things about food and wine’. One visitor confirmed the totality of this experience as follows:

It’s what I just said, the total experience. Meeting the staff, being friendly and helpful makes you feel comfortable. And some are grumpy, and you are just not interested in that. The girl at [the venue] was very nice, helpful and made you feel welcome. That’s part of the experience, the enjoyment (T/C1: PT).

Four out of the ten issues are thus about interpersonal matters, about the enjoyable processes through which visitors get to know more about the products on show and on sale by the business operators. It is not simply about tasting the wine or trying the food, important as those things might be. Here there is clear reference to changing conventions, the idea that

industrial conventions of cost are all-important (see section 2.2.6) is rejected in favour of different approaches.

Certainly there is consistency inasmuch as an enjoyable experience is seen as a large part of what makes a satisfactory visit. Other responses generated similar themes to those recognised previously. Another compared it with other places she had visited but also reiterated similar sentiments as to enjoyable experiences:

And even those in the Yarra Valley, the structure and size of the vineyards and, I suppose, the structure and sales of the cellar door sales area. This was much more personal, which I really rather like, whereas the others tended to be a lot more commercial and I feel, a little dollar-driven (T/C2: PT).

When pushed to further describe what she valued about the interaction with a winery owner another respondent said:

I think it was her homely and unpretentious attitude towards us. And to wine tasting. Sometimes wine tasting can be, if you don't know much about it, and I'm talking about myself here, they can make you feel a bit...it can be...elitist (T/C3: PT).

It is the interpersonal engagement that is critical in responses such as the above. It is not just the product; it is the potential for human interaction about food and/or wine that the visitor enjoys.

However, such interaction could also mean more active involvement. Visitors are sensitive to the problems created by a need to be more involved; some were aware of the high cost of insurance premiums to cover such activity, for instance. Yet they did suggest that the experiences could be more participative. One respondent would have liked it, 'If someone had said, Let's go out into the vineyard and have a look at the vines and be shown the grapes and, This grape is a pinot or whatever, that sort of thing' (T/C2: PT). Another had slightly different expectations based more upon the tourist nature of the visitation. After putting together a theoretical revised plan for what the owner could have done to make the visit more interesting, he concluded, 'I admit it might be more time-consuming for him, but if you put that [welcome tourist] sign up then that's what it's all about, isn't it?' (T/C4: FGT).

One unusual projection upon the idea of interpersonal interaction was provided by a respondent who suggested that,

... so much of my life is wound up in business that we don't have time for friends. I know we are not going to become best buddies but it is nice to have an exchange with someone that is not about getting something done, and it is friendly. There is a lot of conflict in the world and I really enjoy that interpersonal aspect of it (T/C1: FGT).

This bears consideration alongside one of the values proposed in the research, that of establishing relationships of trust with producers. It was proposed that a deterioration of trust (see section 2.2.5.2) had been brought about by the greater detachment between buyer and seller as food chains extended. A gap between producer and consumer was hypothesised. The cash exchange for goods was associated with indifferent and impersonal exchanges typical of supermarket checkouts. It was believed that a need for more positive and trusting relationships might well be sought in closer interpersonal exchanges such as those considered typical of food and wine trails (see section 2.2.5). As it turns out, this was not identified with strongly by the respondents. That does not diminish its relevance, however, given some of the foregoing comments about the need for, and importance of, relationships. In summary, the observation made earlier in this section about experience serve to reinforce the varied emotional freight that is carried by such a concept and the mix of motives and moods that such interactions could involve. This was a point made by Frochot (2003). The experience can involve such things as the warmth of a welcome, the interest shown by producers in the needs of the visitor, the enthusiasm and knowledge expressed by producers about their product, the information exchanged, the activities undertaken and the interpersonal sensitivities involved in such exchanges. This research definitely validates the utility of the experience economy (see section 2.3.7.1). Tourist-consumers are there as tourists as well as consumers, and while food and wine are obviously important to them it is the nature of the overall experience that stands out; the fun and joy they have while being tourists, the memories they take away.

5.6.2.2 Wine and food tasting opportunities

Another major value expressed was ‘Wine tasting opportunities’. In some ways this is a given for that is what wineries offer through their cellar doors—tastings with a view to sales. It is a feature of Australian wineries that open their doors to visitors. It is also expected by the latter. This was the reason that wine tasting was included in the survey.

Wine tasting, however, has been a contentious issue at times. Producers can be critical of visitors who sample wines and then depart without purchasing anything (O'Mahony et al. 2006). A number of producers have initiated a charge for tastings, money that is usually deducted from the price if wines are purchased. The fact that wine tasting is an important part of such visits, however, is not surprising. What is surprising is that this was not ranked the highest value; it was placed after an enjoyable experience. This can imply at least two

things. Firstly, such visitation is not necessarily just about wine appreciation, consumption and purchase. Second, an emphasis on wine experience alone could possibly be to the detriment of an enjoyable experience. This is called attention to by another comment, ‘They weren’t, like if you didn’t know stuff, they weren’t judgemental’ (T/C1: FGT). This is perhaps indicative of a sensitivity introduced in the previous section, a snobbery around wine appreciation, a possibility given the status, prestige and mystery that wine can convey.

The next item, Food tasting opportunities, was included as a separate item for two reasons. Food and wine trails are largely that, wine *and* food trails. They involve both food *and* drink, although not necessarily at each business. Moreover, the interest in culinary tourism suggests that food in all its manifestations is becoming as much a tourist drawcard as wine (see sections 2.2.7 and 2.3.2). Certainly that would meet with the expectations of those such as one of the phone respondents who, when asked what she valued about food, suggested:

I guess it’s the catching up. When you’re working fulltime the best way to catch up with people when you’re limited for time is either sport or eating. A social experience with a group or family or whoever it is, is through food (T/C3: PT).

This supports the work of Ignatov (2003) referred to in the review of literature. That food tasting opportunities are almost as important as wine tasting at a wine-oriented business is supportive of the broader contention that food as well as wine is what interests travellers.

Wine tasting was important to the visitors but not quite as important as food tasting. This emphasis is possibly explained by two of the venues being food-oriented. The Poachers venue is in part café and in part an outlet for smoked products, for which it is highly reputed. The cheesery sells cheese, not wine. So the choice of food tasting as a value as opposed to wine tasting could be indicative of the venues. The Poachers venue is a winery, nevertheless. It has an active cellar door facility. The preferences for food tasting as opposed to wine would not seem to justify the emphasis in the literature on the wine tasting phenomenon. A number of the respondents during the follow-up phone interviews indicated that they considered themselves foodies. One respondent said, when asked whether the extent of her food interests included restaurants, said,

No, not so much restaurant food, more the produce from that area, things like the smoked meats, or if there’d been a cherry farm, a fresh fruit farm, even a place to buy fresh vegetables that had been grown locally. Or nuts, or any of those things, processed or not. And, of course, you have wineries, so tasting wine and that sort of thing; any of those things, more those than the restaurant (T/C4: PT).

This is typical of the types of activities that interest foodies although many foodies would include restaurant foods among their interests as well. Other answers to the question as to whether the respondent viewed themselves in this way included, 'Yes, but I wouldn't consider myself very knowledgeable. It's a subject I'd like to know more about' and, 'Yes, definitely, I'd say I am anyway'. What is a foodie interested in? Typical foodie interests and activities would seem to include the food industry, wineries and wine tasting, food science, following restaurant openings and closings, food distribution, food fads, health and nutrition, and restaurant management. The word foodie was first popularised in 1984 with the publication of 'The Official Foodie Handbook' (Barr 1984) but has been used since to include the characteristics cited above (Fattorini 1994). While foodie activities include wine and wine tasting it is not restricted to that and covers a variety of food concerns as well. Such responses are consistent with material raised in the literature review about personal identity. Food and wine trail visitation is, for some, obviously a means to pursue interests which help establish and maintain their concept of self (Bell 2002; Bell & Valentine 1997; Miele 2006).

The notion that buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper was put forward by a number of the respondents in the surveys. Such a viewpoint is not consistent with the marketing realities of wine. Wine, by some accounts, can be purchased more cheaply through supermarket chains and discount outlets, a point which can cause disquiet with tourists (Howat, Brown & March 2007). Nevertheless, this was a value supported by a number of the respondents and is probably best understood as part of a historic and no longer valid attitude set that equates disintermediation, the removal of the middle man, with reduced retail prices. The reality appears to be that growers/producers try to maximise retail profit at the point of sale in such establishments in order to compensate, in part, for the processes attributed to the larger commercial chains as identified above. A fruit outlet on this trail acknowledged that they received two cents a piece for their product via commercial food chains, and 20 cents at least when they sold it through an on-site outlet on the trail. While the volume was not as substantial, the profit retained in the business was.

In summary, tasting food and wine is a major part of the destination attractions of a food and wine trail. It is the nominal attraction that brings people around food and wine trails. One of the findings of this research, however, is that food tasting—discussing, analysing, sampling and learning about food—is becoming as important as wine tasting. While much investigation has gone into wine tourism, and rightly so given the economic clout of wine

sales, the appeal of food in its various manifestation leading up to and including consumption is of increasing interest and importance. The word ‘foodie’ might be hackneyed but the interests and expenditures of the people so identified are gathering in importance in the realm of tourism.

5.6.2.3 Tourist as explorer

Another element identified as important to the respondents was the chance to explore the area. This value was included in order to test the notion put forward in the literature review that food and wine trails are indeed trails for the explorer. It was anticipated that people choose to travel trails so as to become familiar not only with what the region offers by way of food and drink but as a way of exploring the countryside more generally (Mason, Deery & O'Mahony 2008). It was further proposed that trails *per se* have an appeal of their own, that the chance to find different attractions and novel surroundings is part of their charm (Orians & Heerwagen 1992; Turnbull 2007). The phone follow-ups supported the utility of trails, both as a way to purposefully structure a tourist day and yet again as a tool that can act more or less serendipitously as a guide to activity. Supporting the first position was one respondent, who said, ‘I was just able to look at the [brochure] the night before and say this is what we’re doing tomorrow. So it wasn’t chaotic, we sort of had it planned, which made it easier’ and, ‘the trail pointed out the things that you might not have picked up. Like, if you looked in the Yellow Pages, internet, or talked to locals, you might [have], but the trail made it all sort of easier. There was a lot of things we could have done that day, [the trail] just made it easier’ (T/C3: FGT).

On the other hand, a casual connection with the trail enabled visitors to pursue further parts of it although that might not have been their initial intention.

So we randomly drove off and when I saw the Murray on the map we headed in that direction. ... We visited a cheese-making dairy farm. ... And it was the farm people who gave us the [brochure] as well. ... it is very nice way to structure your visit, the rest of your day, it gives you a bit more of a goal to drive to, than just picking the next town and driving there (T/C2: FGT).

And, finally, ‘I think there’s plenty of people who hit the road without doing their homework and then stumble across something like this and it will guide them a bit. I think it is good’ (T/C2: FGT).

Another respondent, local to the area, said, “I know the area because I’ve grown up there but I have only ever driven from one of the bigger towns to another and not much in between so

it was nice to have a reason to get off the beaten track a bit. And see what was in between' (T/C1: FGT). In this regard, food and wine trails would seem to have the capacity to draw visitors, to attract travellers to areas previously not known as tourist destinations through a focus on food and wine. This applies to local people, who appreciate the opportunity to find something new about areas that they might be superficially familiar with, as much it does to visitors from outside the area. 'I was just so pleased it was there; that there was something else to do, another place to go. The area is well known as the food bowl of Australia, but there are not too many places to visit other than SPC cannery, where you buy tins ... it was good to have something new portrayed' (T/C1: FGT).

Such sentiment seems to ally itself with a viewpoint attested to by a couple of the respondents and that also contributes to the idea of an enjoyable experience. That is, that in some way, trail businesses are different to larger more commercial tourism enterprises and the expectations are somewhat different as well. Comments like, '... they're not trying to process you through like other people in so many other tourist places try to do' (T/C1: FGT), and

It means that it is not crowded. Like, I'm not interested in visiting popular tourist destinations, in the city, like Fed Square [in Melbourne] and others, or Phillip Island ... you don't get a personalised experience there because, like, you'll meet people, but it's...I think what I'm getting at is that it's their job, they're tour guides, or information centre people. OK, it's life but it's their job. Whereas if you go to a smaller place you'll still have a good time but you'll get to meet people on a more personal level. That's kind of why I like to do it. And, also, like, no-one else has done it. It's not talked about all the time and it's like you have discovered something new (T/C3: FGT).

A value difference mainly evidenced by visitors to the Poachers venue was the choice of a venue not visited by mass tourism. On the face of it this is hard to comprehend. The venue is decidedly rural and somewhat removed but it was not sparsely attended during the times the researcher was there. If mass tourism meant dissatisfaction with numbers then this was hardly the place to be. Yet, mass tourism does not necessarily correlate with crowds of people. For, in response to such issues, one respondent said,

Well, I can't bear anything that is contrived, gimmicky. It probably doesn't count so much in vineyards but if they want to make it look Austrian, and it's not, or they might have a big poster or the Big Vine. Like the Big Pineapple. And I just don't enjoy people en masse. I really don't. Loud music and slick presentations I just don't like (T/C2: PT).

This view seems to relate mass tourism to a perceived lack of authenticity. It seems consistent, however, with the views expressed earlier (Olsen 2002) about travellers who want

real experiences and seek local difference. They tend to avoid things they determine to be 'touristy'. However, there were other views which focused more on lack of intimacy and consequent service levels:

And on those days when it's a wine festival, that's when you've got ... So many people are in there that you just can't really get to talk to anyone and it's hard to bustle your way through. So it's nice when it's smaller. Often you can be disappointed with those things. They hype them up but because they're en masse, they're rushed, they're run off their feet and I for one think that the quality can drop at these big mass things whereas if people have more time and they're not being rushed they have more time for the individual (T/C3: PT).

For the opposite of mass tourism was considered to be,

Well it is the intimacy with the people who are running it but also the feeling that you're ... if not special, then maybe the feeling that you have found something that not everybody is aware of or into and perhaps off the beaten track a little bit, maybe finding something that is quite special (T/C3: PT).

In the previous quotation connections began to be established with other aspects of food and wine tourism outlined in the literature, in particular between food and wine visitation and difference, between food and wine visitation and exploration. These ideas were reinforced by others.

We enjoy the discovery. Often times we will make sure to not take the highway if we are going somewhere. We'll look up the non-highway way to get there because often times you see nice things that you... well a highway's a highway, you could be anywhere in the world. You get on those side roads and you see things you normally don't see and it's much more enjoyable, and less traffic (T/C1: PT).

Such sentiments coexist with others cited previously which see food and wine trails as encouraging adventure while at the same time, giving some structure that makes the trip more purposeful. Moreover, such attitudes reflect the views put forward in the literature review under Drive Tourism (see section 2.2.7.3) that reinforce the freedom that such tourism brings and that people do like to drive, to wander and sometimes,

... you don't know quite where you are going to end up or what you might find. People are always anxious to go overseas but haven't seen much of their own country. These are short easy trips and you don't have to stick to any set plan; you can just enjoy (T/C5: PT).

Such sentiment is also consistent with ideas expressed in the literature review about the culinary tourist who seeks different places and pursues them as a means of projecting something about who they are, their identity. When pressed about this connection between food, wine and identity, one of the respondents finally conceded

Well yes, I don't see it quite that way but [friends and family] will ring and ask me what I think. If there's something that's written up that's new and

good, and if I've been able to, we'll go. Then someone from the family will ring and say, have you been there yet? (T/C5: PT).

The issue of roads and signage were included in the survey in order to assess whether road conditions had any affect on tourist-consumer behaviour. The issue was followed up in the semi-structured phone interviews. The findings were not conclusive but there was very little negative response. Business principals, as indicated previously, were divided suggesting that rough road surfaces either attracted the adventurer or discouraged the nervous. Tourist-consumers were similarly conflicted. When asked whether road surfaces bothered her, one respondent said, 'No, we were in the right sort of car. So I quite like it. It makes it more of an adventure and more enjoyable' (T/C2: PT). And, 'No, we enjoy that. It adds to the whole experience. It makes you feel like, Hey, I'm not in the city, I'm in the country and this is what it is supposed to be like' (T/C4: PT). But another cavilled slightly saying. 'But I do prefer a good road. They're easy to get around up there because they're in squares' (T/C4: FGT). Overall, uneven road surfaces did not seem unduly off-putting as long as the signs and the maps provided were adequate.

The signs on the road were also very important, I'd have to say. The signage was good. We certainly needed the signs. Once you got off the main highway you needed signs to let you know you were on the right track and the signs were very good. We arrived at one T intersection or fork and it was quite clear that we had to go right. So signage is very important. (T/C2: PT).

Maps were criticised. 'Maybe half the fun is in exploring things but if you're only there for a week, you don't want to be driving forever on a map that you only thought was going the right way' (T/C4: FGT). This was with particular reference to the mud maps frequently used on trail brochures. Mud maps are outline maps with minimal attention to detail and scale and can require some sophistication of the navigating tourist.

In summary, signs were important as was the calibre of maps. Road surfaces did not seem overly complicated as an issue excerpt for rental cars which often have caveats in their agreements. As one respondent said, 'Well for us, in a rental car road surface is quite important as you are not supposed to take rental vehicles off sealed roads onto gravel' (T/C1: BBB&WT). The overall response was along the lines of:

Oh, excellent, the roads were good, the signposting was good, we didn't get lost at all. It was good; I think it was excellent. We hadn't been there before, so it was all an adventure. But we didn't get lost, we didn't use the GPS although we have one, we didn't need it (T/C1: PT)

In summary, the role of the tourist as explorer should be more explicitly considered in the assessment of tourism destinations such as food and wine trails. The evidence of this

research supports claims in the review of literature pertaining to the attraction and adventure of roads and paths (Suvantola 2002). It was apparent from the semi-structured phone interviews that a food and wine trail is more than just a collection of venues. It is more than access to the food regimen of an area although for some that was indeed the instigation for their visit. For others, the trail was a means to explore a region and thus a means to a happy, enjoyable and interesting day out. People valued togetherness. They also valued difference—different scenery, different places—something they viewed as not characterised by the banality of commercial tourism. Such a day out used comestibles as a means to explore a territory but was not necessarily the *sine qua non* of that day out.

5.6.2.4 The tourist as learner

The idea of learning was consistent throughout the responses; learning, information, education were all words that came freely from respondents both as tourists and consumers. It was not just a matter of tasting, trying or driving around. People wanted to know and a formal education program was not expected. It was better expressed in ideas expressed previously when a respondent noted that she would have liked to have gone out into the vineyards and had things shown and explained to her. Respondents expected informed interactions that lead somewhere. One summarised it by saying,

I just enjoy the friendliness of it... we don't have to solve the problems of the world. I just like to hear where they're coming from, what they're hoping to achieve. ... I can't buy all their produce and solve all their monetary problems. But that five minute relationship which you develop by talking to them, I enjoy it (T/C2: FGT).

5.6.3 Visitation

It needs to be restated that the number of people in trail visitation as a percentage of those visiting the venues overall was quite small. It ranged from 25 per cent at the cheesery to four per cent at the food venue on the Barossa Trail. Low participation in trail visitation was consistent throughout the three trails although in the Barossa, where the trail visitation was minimal, the organiser was in the throes of preparing new advertising material to promote the trail after the changes that had been made.

Trail work, as has been stated, is not the only means of revenue production for most of the businesses involved. It is usually but one of a number and as such has to be judged generally on the costs, financial, physical and material, that have to be outlaid in order to generate the returns. On the other hand there are businesses, as has been indicated, which generate a lot of

their income from their participation in a trail and would be considerably worse off without it. Moreover, the trail's utility to tourists is also important, a point that will be taken up again in Chapter Six.

5.7 Ancillary agents

The survey and interview process with the tourist-consumers completed the investigation of the second group as identified in Figure 4.2. At this point both the trail business operators and the tourist-consumers on trails had been interviewed. The third group was the ancillary agents and it is the findings from that group of ten which will be considered now. What is the point of interviewing ancillary agents, and who are they? As indicated earlier (see section 4.8.3) trails are dynamically interconnected with their communities and the broader world around them. The purpose of interviews with the ancillary agents—local and state government tourist officers connected with each state and trail, local businesses that rely on trails for some of their revenue, and local food and wine ‘champions’—was to gauge their attitudes towards the development and performance factors determined by the first two groups. The rationale for this and the process for such interviews were outlined in Chapter Four.

In general, the ancillary agents had no real difficulties with the findings generated by the first two groups. They had four real areas of concern, and they were: coordination, resources, consistency and personnel (and training). They will be discussed throughout the next four sections.

5.7.1 Coordination

One tourism official said in response to the issue of coordination. ‘And that is an absolute key point as well. Whether it’s a food and wine group or a food and wine trail, they live or die on the strength of who’s putting the time and effort into it’ (AA1). This was apparent in the findings for the business respondents as well; coordination is critical. The above respondent finished by saying: ‘As a state government we don’t tend to put a lot of money into food and wine trails because we see the problem of deciding whether they live or die. It’s not where it really should come from’ (AA1). This expresses some ambivalence about trail sustainability if the financial support and energy is not forthcoming from the region or the business operators themselves. Governments, apparently, may not be seen to be picking

winners or losers, but this varies from place to place. For, when asked about the value of trails to the state one of the tourist officials said.

... the view is that each region is different and each region has its own strengths. They certainly support this in terms of it being a vehicle to promote our product strengths of food and wine. The theory behind it is that people will see how much there is to do and say, Hey, there's such a lot to do we'd better stay another night. So it's ultimate yield (AA7).

It was noted by the ancillary agents, however, that coordinating trails was not an easy task, nor was finding the human and fiscal resources needed to establish a trail in the first place.

One reason for this was given by one of the ancillary agents, who suggested that,

Because they don't see it as a real part of their business, and it might be worth only one per cent of their takings, it has been a little difficult at times to get them enthused about tourism. But most of them have been willing to give it a go, and have been quite supportive of what we have been doing and they want to work with tourism and have built those relationships over a long time and are keen to ... But when I'm talking to them I have to be conscious that it such a small part of their business (AA5).

Coordination does not have to be one person, however. One of the ancillary agents said, when asked what she would see as the principal conditions laid down for a trail replied as follows.

I would lay down that that there had to be a committee chosen by the members of the trail. Probably a committee of three or four, enough to have some variety, but not too many that you can't get a decision. They should be responsible back to whoever provides money. If there's no money then responsibility back to members. I would definitely want clear guidelines about opening hours because there's nothing that annoys tourists more than when you're only open by appointment (AA4).

This quotation also emphasises two other point; financial resources and consistency of approach.

5.7.2 Resources

'Resources are always an issue. How do you find the human resources to coordinate those things and also the financial resources to kick them off?' (AA3). Human resources in this sense are to be seen as coordination, the point discussed previously. Trails need coordination—individually or by a group. Financial resources become controversial when the trail either grows beyond the energies of volunteer coordination and requires paid staffing or requires funding for things such as a brochure or special projects. Trails have worked out ways to generate funding. The Barossa trail uses a smart card to help generate some funds. Some levy annual charges on their members; for the Poachers Trail it is \$500 per year and \$500 more in in-kind support. Others seek support from governments, a point

problematised in the previous paragraph. Tourist officials, being the source of some funding for tourism projects and hence the objects of special pleading, saw resourcing as a problem.

5.7.3 Consistency

The need for consistency was another point stressed by the ancillary agents; one that was introduced by the business operators under the aegis of tourist readiness in section 5.4.5. A tourist official noted how important it was for a trail visitor to, ‘...see a consistent product, —everything from service standards, the things they are talking about from a communications standpoint—they need to be consistent’ (AA2). This also related to a particular point made by the business operators and that is for the businesses to be open when they said they would be. For as the same tourist official commented.

In terms of availability, one of the challenges for them is that a lot of people who are on [the trail] aren’t available all the time ... because if someone comes [to the area] and they want to do a touring route, if they come on a Tuesday-Wednesday it is a good chance that quite a few of the places won’t be open, which is not good from the word-of-mouth perspective (AA2).

A bed-and-breakfast agent supported this by saying that

Quite a few people on the trails are only half-baked, a lot of them just want to do a few sales here and there but aren’t really into the full-on tourist experience and the open most days a week requirement (AA4).

5.7.4 Personnel (and training)

Training was the fourth main point to be taken up by ancillary agents. This usually involved three things: training for technology, training in tourism and training for tourists.

For a trail like the Barossa where using a smart-card is important, people need to be familiar with both the behaviour of the equipment and the benefits to be gained from it. As one ancillary agent said, ‘It was that it was new; they hadn’t worked with the technology before’ (AA5). The same person commented that,

... making time for the tourist is a big factor, they just mightn’t see the monetary return. Not everybody’s in it for that reason though. Some see the bigger picture and want to be in to help the region. But others will say, Naaah, it’s just not just worth my while. I need to be spending much more time on my [property] or whatever (AA5).

Training in tourism is thus about inculcating the values and enthusiasm for the trail and its products and services. (This was interpreted as commitment by the business operators; see section 5.3.5) Training for tourists meant the sort of activities referred to earlier; familiarity with the tourists and their needs and expectations. ‘There’s also the [visitor information centres]. They can make or break you’ (AA5). The ancillary agents, particularly those in

tourism, were aware of the importance of visitor information centres to local tourism activities.

The matter of training provision and responsibility was not addressed consistently. Tourism officials often provide general training on topics they think might be relevant to their local businesses. Some local governments similarly provide training in business skills through their economic development agencies, a point noted in the Farm Gate Trail interview. In the end, however, it is up to individual trail business operators to seek out training possibilities based on their own assessment of need.

5.7.5 Strengths of trails

The ancillary agents stressed the utility of trails in providing collaborative tourist destinations that individual businesses often seem incapable of putting together. For, ‘... in terms of the overall benefit, my experience is that collaboration and the marketing and cross promotion that occurs as a result of that, it adds great benefit to the participants’ (AA3). This was reinforced by another tourist official who said:

I think the benefit is that it does encourage people to work cooperatively. It encourages a sense of cooperation and people understanding the value of clusters of businesses. A lot of regions tend to struggle with that. A lot of businesses want to do things independently rather than work together, cooperating with others, realising that a joint message is more powerful than the individual (AA2).

A trail as a joint activity has greater potential to attract tourists than one business on its own. This reflected the view put forward strongly by the business participants and reported previously (see sections 5.3.2 to 5.3.5 in particular). As one of the ancillary agents said,

... it’s about getting them all together to put out a much stronger message as to why people should come. So if someone is thinking about coming to [a venue] it is more likely they will visit if they know there’s four or five other things they can do and maybe stay four night instead of two’ (AA2).

The strength of a trail lies in its ability to create a destination; their help is paramount in providing cooperation, joint tourism activities and leisure interests with difference in an otherwise crowded marketplace. Another important factor of trails, and related to destination, was considered to lie in their variety, ‘I believe the single key factor from a consumer point of view is variety’ (AA5).

5.8 Conclusion

This concludes the description of the findings for the three stakeholder groups; business operators, tourist-consumers and ancillary agents. The trail businesses determined an extensive list of factors relating to both performance and development. However, the importance of recent substantive changes within the Australian economy was considered to be the main development factor. Trail businesses need to generate more revenue in uncertain times.

Performance factors were more varied. Businesses generally concurred with the eleven performance points generated but brought the critical points down to four; variety and quality of experience; responding to the tourist's need for experience with a valid 'story'; tourist readiness, the willingness and capacity of businesses to deal with tourists as distinct from just customers there for a product. The need for coordination was also highlighted.

Tourist-consumers attested to the need for an experience, something beyond the usual expectations of a commercial transaction. This could be related to the product but it might not be. Learning about the product was important for some, a good day out was imperative for all.

For the most part the three groups were relatively consistent in their opinions and attitudes towards food and wine trails but there were some changes of emphases. The next chapter will summarise the findings and compare them before presenting a framework through which food and wine trails can be better understood and recommendations made for their support and development.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Chapter One: Introduction
Chapter Two: Literature Review; Part One
Chapter Three: Literature Review; Part Two
Chapter Four: Research methodology
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<u>6.1 Introduction</u>
6.2 A food & wine trail system
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6.1 Introduction

The findings of this research strongly support that food and wine trails occupy a unique place in Australian tourism, albeit as a niche product. Trails are attractive, effective and interesting. Food and wine trails appeal to and satisfy visitors while enhancing income for businesses and regions. They are thus a way that food and wine enterprises can address the economic difficulties that have confronted many of them over the last 30 years. By participating in a linked trail of gastronomic activity, business operators generate revenue through tourism. Trails are able to assist food and wine producers survive in changing circumstances.

Trails add value to tourism. They attract people to and through regions. Tourist-consumers attest to their attractiveness. Such affirmation is based on the quality and diversity of the food and wine product. Yet, overwhelmingly the findings indicate that tourist-consumers like to talk as well as taste; to share in an enjoyable encounter at multiple levels. Competent trail businesses recognise this and provide opportunities for social interaction, exchange of information, learning and fun. For a main finding of this research, confirmed by businesses and tourists alike, is that trail visitors are looking for an enjoyable experience.

A food and wine trail is niche tourism. Trails largely present diversity in a small way to a limited market. The research endorses that trails provide some tourists with a more enjoyable set of experiences and ensure their needs and wants are being met (Robinson & Novelli 2005). These findings support the view that niche tourism activities such as Australian food and wine trails satisfy both producers and consumers. For producers, trails function as an

alternative food network. They can and do provide opportunities for businesses to augment their incomes. They do this through direct exposure to tourism. For tourist-consumers they provide meaningful and enjoyable experiences.

The principal purpose of this chapter, however, is to reflect on the findings of the research as they relate to the research objectives established in the Introduction (see section 1.6). The structure of the chapter is as follows. Following this introduction, a systems approach to understanding the concept of food and wine trails is outlined (section 6.2). This will also be used to underpin the interpretive framework presented in section 6.8. Prior to that, however, the research findings will be considered against the other research objectives. The chapter will conclude with commentary on the contribution of the thesis (section 6.9) and recommendations to accompany it (section 6.10).

6.2 A food and wine trail system

Trails are practical responses to the varied needs of food and wine producers and tourists alike. They can be of as much interest to foodies, that is, people interested in food in all its aspects (see section 2.2.7), as they can be to more casual visitors, trail businesses and local development authorities. Food and wine trails are based upon pulling together disparate food and wine businesses and shaping them into an integrated tourist attraction. Such a process requires resolution of the development and performance factors identified in this research. An initial interpretive mechanism will help background this complexity.

The following figure (6.1) has been developed in order to help put the findings of the research into perspective. (The figure will also be expanded throughout this chapter in order to help establish the research framework.) Figure 6.1 is based upon the principles of socio-technical systems within systems theory (Emery & Trist 1978; Kast & Rosenzweig 1985; van Eijnatten 1993; Volberda 1998). Systems theory is a long-established means of understanding organisational environments and processes—in this case food and wine trails. At its simplest, systems theory suggests that any social phenomenon can be understood by what it takes from the environment as inputs—people, resources and ideas—processes, and then puts back into the community as outputs—often goods, services (Kast & Rosenzweig 1985) or experience (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Garrod et al (2006) concur that tourism is like any other economic activity in that it can be thought of as a production process in which raw

materials are taken in and assembled into final products, services, or experiences. Figure 6.1 illustrates the situation for food and wine trails.

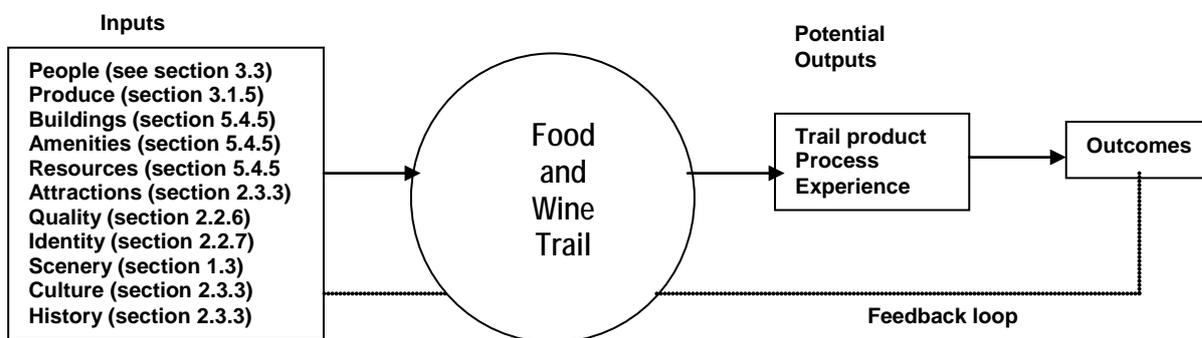


Figure 6.1: Food and wine trail system

The components are derived from the features that have emerged throughout this research. Figure 6.1 suggests that a trail takes inputs and turns them into outputs. Inputs are diverse. On the one hand, they can be very practical; human and physical resources such as people, products, buildings, amenities and attractions. On the other, they can be less tangible; scenery, culture, history and identity, for example. A trail processes these into outputs; a product, process or an experience valued by tourists. The positive experiences for visitors are then an outcome of the system, as is the revenue generation for producers. The success of the outcomes as assessed by the tourist-consumers and the trail businesses is then fed back to the trail producers. Changes can then be made if necessary. The success of the trail in producing outputs essentially depends upon the performance factors discussed herein. They will be further depicted in other figures (6.2 & 6.3) introduced later.

Systems thinking assumes that the world can be interpreted as a set of identifiable sub-systems—components which interact to produce an effect greater than the sum of the various parts (Johns & Lee-Ross 1998). For systems are open, not closed, and they are affected by other systems, whole or in part (Volberda 1998). While they can be flexible and fluid, social systems have theoretical system boundaries. They interact with the environment and other systems (Cooke & Morgan 1998). Changes within one system, therefore, can have implications for others. The principal elements external to food and wine trails that affected their development were identified throughout the review of literature (see chapters Two and Three). Their relevance within this research will be dealt with now utilising the research objectives identified in the Introduction (see section 1.6).

6.3 Research objective 1

Research objective 1 read as follows; establish the principal factors involved in the development of food and wine trails in Australia.

The principal development factors substantiated through the research were the;

- impact of change in rural areas,
- the importance of cost,
- the availability of alternative food networks and the
- relevance of economies of scope and synergy.

These ideas were developed in Chapter Five and will now be considered further.

6.3.1 Impact of rural change

The research strongly corroborates the impact of change in rural areas largely wrought by globalisation. Rural areas in Australia have been affected by many actors and factors outside their control. These were identified in the review of literature (see Chapter Two). The global financial crisis of 2008 was another factor affecting wine and food sales (Fornasari 2009).

The impact of such massive transformation in the rural economy of Australia has been enormous. Therefore, the one key influential factor for trail development and participation identified by trail businesses was one or other aspect of such change that has confronted large and small businesses alike in rural Australia. This was expressly and expansively pointed out by the business operators and the factors involved were widely canvassed in Chapter Two. This research has identified that some primary producers have had to modify their business approaches given the changes to Australia's economic situation, domestically and internationally. Old certainties no longer hold. Primary production was once an almost sacrosanct Australian industry characterised by banalities such as 'home on the sheep's back'. But no longer. Reduced tariff protection, diminished regulatory assistance and other neo-liberal policy changes supported on a global basis by the World Trade Organisation (WTO 2009), have exposed Australian industry to increased competition. Manufacturing has declined in volume and major components of it have moved offshore to capitalise on cheaper labour costs and less costly manufacturing sites (Mishra 2004). Primary production has absorbed the same pressures and has been forced to yield ground to cheaper imports.

The impact of such change, however, was different within different sectors and regions, a point made by Beer et al. (2003), and reinforced by this research. The depth and extent of such change meant that many rural producers have had to investigate other revenue sources

in order to ensure their business effectiveness and/or survival. For some, it really was that simple. Operators turned to trails as serious, if subsidiary and supplementary, means to augment business revenue. They also saw them as a means of making a positive contribution to local tourism and the local economy—a process which then fed back to help them as well. The more tourists that came to a food and wine area, the more the reputation of the area was seen to grow, and thus attract more tourists.

One or other aspect of this profound economic upheaval was identified by all businesses. Individual operators prioritised the overall importance differently as would be expected given their unique circumstances. For instance, wineries, large and small, often emphasised the highly competitive nature of their business, domestically and internationally. This was a point raised and discussed in the review of literature (see section (2.2.3)). For while wineries have been increasing in number in Australia, national wine exports have been subjected to severe overseas competition. At the same time local and international wine consumption has more or less plateaued. In such circumstances the intensity of local competition has been amplified. Wineries evinced a strong need to draw patrons to their cellar doors in order to maximise both sales and profit margins. A finding of this research is that trails help motivate tourist-consumers to visit.

Food suppliers likewise emphasised competition. For some it was the difficulty of getting any sort of shelf space to sell their product. Others drew attention to their relationships with large, commercial food supply chains that could and did drive down their incomes by demanding low supply prices. For such businesses, participation in a food and wine trail helped diversify sales and generate healthier profit margins for their products. The research findings strongly implicate the dramatic changes to Australia's economy in the development of food and wine trails. Their existence is synchronous with such difficulties.

It is possible to identify 'economic change', 'improving business revenue' and 'contributions to local economies' (see section 5.2) as push factors, that is, forces that compelled businesses to diversify the nature of their activities. A dairy on the Farm Gate Trail faced competition and decreased prices for the sale of bulk milk. Cheese was an alternative product that offered increased returns. It could also be readily produced on the property. Participating in the Farm Gate Trail, however, was pulled by the availability of the trail. Manifestly, if the trail had not been there the cheesery could not have joined it. This was an opportunity that could be taken up because the dairy farm was in the trail region, the premises and parking were adequate for

visitors and the business principals were willing to make the necessary commitment to tourism. So, the need to generate extra revenue, the means to do so, the presence of an alternative food network (the trail), and the particular pertinence of the dairy's economies of synergy all coincided. The business joined the Farm Gate Trail.

These were circumstances familiar to other trail businesses. It was certainly similar for a nut producer on the Farm Gate Trail. The economic circumstances, however, were more related to the profit limitations forced upon them by the commercial food chains. The trail was in the area, the nut grove had a small building already operating for on-farm sales. The trail was a sensible extension to promotional activity.

The situation was similar for wineries. All wine producers in the three trails had well-established cellar doors. Advertising their involvement in a food and wine trail thus implied no greater additional costs than those involved in special advertising and promotion. They did not have to build new premises; they were there already. Similarly, food producers often had small on-site premises that they could convert to facilities suitable to welcome visitors without major added expenditure.

The critical factor for the development of food and wine trails, therefore, was the power of changing circumstances affecting producer revenue. Many food and wine businesses have had to confront the grave uncertainty associated with economic developments that *inter alia* have exposed Australia's agricultural producers to serious domestic and international competition. Such changes, outlined in Chapter Two, drove some producers to look for other revenue sources. They were forced to seek new markets without the protection of tariffs and the shelter provided by dedicated government policies and departments. The choice to seek other options was driven by economic uncertainty. The choice to operate in a food and wine trail was driven by the availability of a trail, the ability and willingness of the businesses to conform to trail requirements through economies of synergy, and the small costs usually associated with trail participation.

6.3.2 Implications of cost

The issue of cost was an important consideration for producers, however. Like businesses anywhere, trail participants have to balance projected costs against possible benefits. Costs meant expenses associated with preparing venues for public visitation including amenities, parking spaces, signage and promotion, for example. These can be relatively straightforward

to comprehend; the financial outlays associated with fencing and grading of roads and property, for instance. Then again, meeting the requirements set by state and local governments for operating public buildings can initially be nebulous but potentially onerous, and expensive. The requirements also differ from state to state and region to region. There can also be expenses associated with trail specifics such as advertising. Most times the latter were not considered problematic as the business participants indicated (see section 5.3). In some cases, such as the following, they did present problems.

A small winery in the Barossa withdrew from participation in the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. The owners could not justify the anticipated revenue against projected outlays. They could not see how the extra income projected as a result of their participation could cover the costs of the special promotion in the form of a small credit card machine that was required. They estimated that the extra wine sold as a result of participation in the trail would not be enough to cover the added expenditure. Participation in a trail was thus more than a need to respond to changing external circumstances. It was a decision based upon balancing a number of factors that often related to projected costs and estimated income.

The importance of expenditure had other negative spin-offs though. The inability or unwillingness of a number of producers on the Farm Gate Trail to provide venues suitable for public visitation was a matter of some vexation for other operators. The latter saw the reluctance of such producers to respond appropriately to tourists through the provision of adequate venues as detrimental to the presentation of the trail overall. The unwillingness of these producers to prepare their properties for tourists could have been because they could not afford it, or they were not prepared to commit fully to tourism. This could reinforce the view that there are businesses who participate in trails only as a means to get more consumers rather than provide an attraction for tourists. There is nothing in this research, however, that either confirms or denies this. This was an issue that had not been adequately resolved at the completion of the research.

6.3.3 Importance of alternative food networks

Certain factors were stressed differently by various actors. For instance, participation in alternative food networks as a means to circumvent or supplement participation in the dominant food chains (see section 2.2.5), was stressed more by food providers, particularly those in the Farm Gate Trail. Large national and international food chains often constrained financial returns to primary producers. Participation in a trail was definitely a way of

improving returns per volume of product. This was confirmed by the trail business operators (see section 5.3). This research thus reinforces the work of Andrée et al. (2007) referred to previously (see section 2.2.5). They suggest that producers often use more than one alternative food network. The defining feature of such networks is that they present opposition or resistance to the power relations of conventional food systems, a point corroborated by this research.

On the other hand, large and small producers in the wine industry confront different problems, albeit ones brought about by the changes within the Australian and world economy. Wineries are in a highly competitive landscape. The dominant scenario is a few central, massive companies surrounded by a growing number of small to medium-sized wine-making operations. The big four wine companies in Australia are: Southcorp, Beringer Blass, BRL Hardy and Orlando Wyndham. These major companies control the industry. The comment by a wine grower on the Poachers Trail was telling. He said he participated in the trail because he wanted to stand out and be different. There were some 2000 small to medium wineries Australia-wide all competing for the same limited market. Anything he could do to attract people to his cellar door was valuable. Competition for sales was a major preoccupation for all producers in a country where the wine industry's productive capacity increased from 80,000 hectares (ha.) in 1996 to 140,000 ha. by 2000 (ACIL 2002). Small producers find it difficult to have their products available at local restaurants and retail outlets where the wine lists are often controlled by specialist companies. This was confirmed by a wine grower on the Southern Highlands Food and Wine Trail whose input was used to trial the research process.

For us, especially because of the wine glut and how difficult it is to actually sell wine, and how competitive it is using distributors and getting into restaurants. The competition is just so cut-throat, difficult, time-consuming and expensive, that for us [participating in a food and wine trail] was a logical thing to do (BP1: SHT).

Access to larger urban retail outlets is also competitive. Wineries are forced to price their product such that wine shops can often sell at a price cheaper than the same bottle available at a cellar door. This point gives the lie to those who believe that buying at a cellar door is cheaper. Trail development and participation strongly reflected the need to maintain and enhance revenue through bringing visitors to the cellar door (and the farm gate) where price margins for the products were better than those available through other outlets.

6.3.4 Relevance of economies of scope and synergy

The importance of economies of scope and synergy were confirmed throughout the research. These concepts were discussed previously (see section 2.2.5). Basically, scope identifies those business opportunities that can be developed because they are similar to, or benefit from, already existent operations. Synergy implies connectedness with other business priorities within the region.

The relevance of tourism to both these trends is simple to establish, particularly for cellar doors. Most wineries, for the reasons outlined above, operate cellar doors. Cellar doors are direct sales outlets located on wine properties, often operated seven days a week. Such work fits easily within the scope of existing business ventures. This was certainly the case in the three trails researched. (Grape growers, as distinct from wineries, do not have to do this as their product is frequently committed to other wineries even before it is grown, and they generally do not bottle wine to sell.)

Setting up a cellar door takes time and money. As a result, winery cellar doors thus need to attract more custom. Wineries are often in out of the way locations. Certainly as rural enterprises they are not always on main routes or otherwise easily accessed. Cooperation among wine and food producers on a trail is an effective way of encouraging people to and through regions, a point reinforced by the tourist-consumers. Trails encourage visitation. Establishing a trail was often synergistic with the broader local priorities established by tourism authorities. This was supported by the interviews with the ancillary agents.

The worth of such business-tourism connections was strongly attested to by businesses on all trails, and confirmed by the ancillary agents. The relationship was so established on the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail that the trail coordinator was a local tourism official. Similarly, the Farm Gate Trail had been, in part, established by the local tourism authority. Poachers Trail businesses definitely saw themselves as engaged in tourism and liaised with the local tourism authorities whenever they could. For most trail businesses, opening a cellar door as part of a trail, an economy of synergy, usually just meant participation in a joint brochure as the cellar door was ready and available for tourists.

For some food producers this was slightly more complex. At least two primary producers on the Farm Gate Trail had modified their farm houses to accept bed-and-breakfast tourists. In both cases they had also built small reception premises into their properties where their products were displayed and sold. These latter buildings were where tourists on the trail, and

others, were welcomed. A small food producer on the Barossa trail utilised home premises to sell product although it was actually made in commercial premises elsewhere in the Barossa area. These are all elements consistent with a scope economy whereby rural producers are able to enter tourism while utilising or modifying already existing aspects of their businesses. Other food producers such as an orange grove and a horticultural property on the Farm Gate Trail, for instance, entered the tourism industry using the sheds that already existed on their properties. The sheds were originally a means to sell product to roadside visitors. The economy of synergy was apparent in all cases as the three trails operated in concert with the broader aims of tourism as conceived of by tourism authorities in their separate areas. The following text box illustrates the principal development factors in the formation of trails.

Conclusions 1

The principal development factors are thus that:

- i. Trails are developed and/or participated in as a result of one or other aspect of change that has confronted contemporary rural Australia.
- ii. Food and wine producers respond to different economic stimuli.
- iii. Different regions face different economic difficulties; some are less pressed to seek other means of revenue generation.
- iv. Participation in a trail is often as the result of an idiosyncratic response to a local aspect of the economy of scope or synergy. If a business has the capacity to engage in a trail; without additional expense, they are more likely to do so.
- v. Trail participants, as with all businesses, have to balance costs against benefits. Sometimes it will not pay to join a trail.
- vi. Trails are an alternative food network

6.4 Research objective 2

Research objective 2 read as follows; determine the principal factors affecting the performance of food and wine trails in Australia.

6.4.1 Performance indicators

The businesses identified the main performance factors as:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trail coordination, social capital and trust. 2. Critical mass, people, product and promotion. 3. Variety. 4. Experience and stories. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Tourist readiness and commitment. 6. Quality. 7. Promotion and theme. 8. Agency support and regulation. 9. Compliance costs. |
|---|---|

The above factors were described in detail in Chapter Five (see section 5.4). They are the main factors considered by businesses to contribute to the performance of food and wine trails. Compliance costs, however, have been more comprehensively dealt with in section 6.3.2 as a part of development issues. Diverse trail businesses responded differently to particular elements among the performance factors. This reflects their distinct problems and different requirements of trail participation.

6.4.2 Ranking of performance indicators

Nevertheless, the nature of the research did enable a ranking of the factors. As indicated previously (see Chapter Four), the final set of businesses interviewed was on the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. The emergent nature of the research made it possible to ask those business representatives to rank the performance factors as they had been developed to that point. The Barossa respondents considered variety and quality of experience, as well as responding to the tourist's need for experience with a valid 'story', to be equally and vitally important. Complementing these factors were tourist readiness, the willingness and capacity of businesses to deal with tourists as distinct from just customers there for a product. A warm welcome was also ranked highly. These factors were consistent with the other business group interviews when participants were asked to give their personal opinions about factor priorities. These factors also closely aligned with the needs of the tourist-consumer. That is, visitors are going to want a warm welcome and a 'story'. They are going to expect the businesses to be ready for them with a valid and enjoyable experience; an expectation strongly borne out by this research which will be returned to later in this section.

6.4.2.1 Coordination

Outside of the factors just presented, however, the Barossa group also ranked coordination, and support by government, as valuable. This was not surprising given that the Barossa trail is coordinated by a representative of the local tourism authority as part of that officer's normal tasks. For the two trails that did not have the luxury of a paid coordinator, coordination was still important—as was whatever support was available from governments

as noted previously. Coordination was either honoured in the breach, as in the Farm Gate Trail where there was no designated coordinator and one seemed needed, or in the reality as at Poachers Trail, where the woman who established the trail, was its de facto coordinator. Businesses on the Barossa trail did not cede primary importance to trail coordination, ostensibly because they were happy enough with it. The importance of trail coordination was stressed on the other two trails, however, mainly because of the difficulty of providing and maintaining it, a point emphasised by the ancillary agencies as well. Effective trail coordination is essential, without it trails flounder. This research suggests that it is primarily the social capital of people that enables them to both develop and administer trails. In both the Twin Rivers trail used as a research pilot, and the Poachers Trail, it was evidenced that the trails would not have commenced without the energy, knowledge and connections of the trail progenitors, that is, their social capital. They would certainly not have continued without such connections and enthusiasm.

The findings of this research reinforce Plummer et al's (2006) contention, discussed in the Literature Review (see section 2.3.6), that trail businesses can come into conflict as a result of poor coordination. While determining the causes of such conflict were not within the objectives of this thesis, it can be assumed that differing attitudes towards the purpose of trails (see section 5.4.1) and matters such as the cost of credit machines (see section 5.4.9) could cause dissension. Lack of adequate coordination and differing interests among trail participants would add further difficulties. Such matters also highlight again the importance of social capital as a means to overcome such complications (see sections 2.3.6 & 5.4.1).

Coordination demands are such that trail coordinators can 'wear out'. It is time consuming, demanding work and in the case of the Poachers Trail there was no remuneration for the coordinator except revenue brought to the business as a direct result of her work. There was not a designated coordinator on the Farm Gate Trail. It was held together by the enthusiasm of an ad hoc committee of participant businesses and the local tourist official. They coordinated the trail together. In the Barossa, the trail was officially coordinated by the local regional tourism authority officer. She met regularly with trail members to coordinate trail activities. Coordination of trails is an important issue and needs to be taken seriously by those on trails and those interested in their performance.

6.4.2.2 Other important performance factors

The most important performance factors for the trail groups were; providing a variety and quality of experience, responding to the tourist's need for experience with a valid 'story', as well as tourist readiness and a warm welcome. This is consistent with the responses of the tourist-consumers who ranked the value of experience very highly. They gave the category 'an enjoyable experience' by far their highest rating. They also prioritised food and wine tasting highly, although such categories could also be included under the heading of experience as well. The tourist-consumer also valued learning, education and information, in particular, talking with the food/wine grower and staff as well as the opportunity to learn new things about food and wine. A warm welcome was also prioritised highly by the tourist-consumer. There is thus consistency of intention here between trail businesses and tourists. The research indicates that a food and wine trail is a tourist phenomenon and must provide experiences consistent with tourist expectations.

Quality was not contentious. All business participants conceded that quality was an important contributor to both their individual success and the performance of a trail. It was just that quality, apart from the acceptance of HACCP guidelines, was difficult to define. In agreement with Ilbery (1998), most seemed to identify it as a consistent idea of enhanced attributes whether it be a service or a product. One of the business participants said their trail experience was of world standard although just what was meant by that was difficult to assess. In the absence of consistent trail motifs, however, an idea that will be returned to later, quality became a dominant theme.

6.4.2.3 Emergent themes: variety, tourist readiness and commitment

Two themes, which have been described in Chapter Five and mentioned in the last section, were emergent; that is, they were not evident within the literature and therefore not anticipated. They were uncovered as a result of the exploratory nature of the research (see section 4.8). The themes were variety and the idea of tourist readiness and commitment. The findings of this research confirm the importance of both these concepts as critical factors.

Variety is more or less self-explanatory. It was strongly believed by business participants that trails needed to have more than one type of business for tourist-consumers to visit and enjoy. A trail should, therefore, have food and wine businesses, a point implied in the Introduction and substantiated in section 4.5. A winery owner described it as not having your palate become jaded by too much wine. A food producer explained it as the need to have

venues with different things to present and display. This was based on the idea that visitors would become bored with the same thing. It also meant that the totality of the destination or attraction had to be characterised by difference in some way.

Such a view, while supported within this thesis, does not necessarily conform to the idea of independent wine trails or separate food trails. The former is available in Australia (Riesling Trail 2007), the latter certainly within Europe (Meyer-Czech 2003). It would have to be assumed, however, that variety in the sense of difference would need to be obvious on such trails if, as a trail business owner said, the participants were not to become jaded with too much of the same thing. The three trails utilised in the research all had a variety of food and wine outlets. Poachers Trail had creative arts establishments as well.

Tourist readiness and commitment were strongly supported by business owners. This was a strong finding of the research. It was the belief of business owners that their staff had to be prepared and ready for tourists. This meant their premises had to be adequate and operational and dates and times of opening had to be adhered to. All staff had to be ready and committed to the tourist, ready not just to answer questions but to commit to giving the tourist-consumer the positive interaction and experience they expect. Not being ready was at the heart of difficulties expressed by trail businesses and recorded in section 5.4.5 where it was stated among other factors that, '... it is important that when people say they are open and operating, that they are open and operating. That makes a ... trail work' (BP1: SHT).

6.4.3 Performance sub-systems

A further research objective, taken up more fully in section 6.8, is a framework to enable greater understanding of food and wine trail development and performance. To enable this, it is proposed to allocate the foregoing performance factors within four sub-systems consistent with the systems theory introduced earlier in this chapter (section 6.2). This will be used to develop the framework later.

The sub-systems which can be identified from this study are those that relate to management, technology, beliefs and personnel. The manner in which the performance factors are distributed throughout the four subsystems will be outlined shortly. These are, however, the four broad areas of performance the results of this research indicate trail businesses have to negotiate in order for a trail to perform. These four sub-systems thus comprise a system set

for food and wine trails. They are illustrated in the system diagram (Figure 6.2) that follows which has been augmented from Figure 6.1 (see section 6.2).

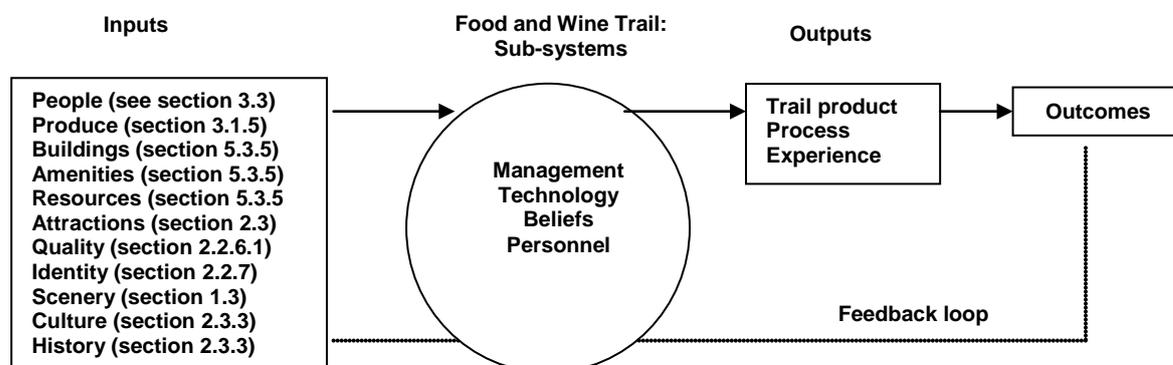


Figure 6.2: Food and wine trail sub-systems

The implications to be drawn from the above figure, and strongly derived from the findings, are as follows. The inputs that feature in a food and wine trail are processed through the trail system. The sub-systems identified are the ones put forward as critical to best understanding the performance of food and wine trails. The four sub-system and their integral performance factors will now be described.

6.4.3.1 Management sub-system

Management includes the mechanisms by which a trail is coordinated and decisions made about resources, the size, nature, shape and direction of the trail itself. It includes the liaison necessary to accomplish the resolution of these ends. This could involve contact with other local and regional agencies as well as governments. The Barossa trail is coordinated by the local state tourism officer. The Farm Gate Trail was established by a regional tourism official with some initial financial support from a state government tourism agency as well. Poachers Trail was initiated and organised privately, but the coordinator has maintained constant and meaningful dialogue with local tourism and state authorities throughout the trail's existence. Such processes strongly emphasised the relevance of social capital and networking raised in the review of literature (see sections 2.3.4 and 3.2.1).

6.4.3.2 Technology sub-system

Technology incorporates the soft and hard mechanisms by which the outcomes of a trail are achieved. The hard technology includes such things as the product, the tourist readiness of

the premises, the amenities, roads, parking, advertising and promotion. Sometimes these are taken for granted in that the wineries, for instance, already had cellar doors and the infrastructure to support them. But the dairy and the nut grove on the Farm Gate Trail both made mention of the need to establish and maintain special premises—and be tourist ready. Soft technologies include the development of stories and a theme. All the business operators interviewed made mention of the need for a story as the essence of the tourist experience; a special means of entertaining and informing visitors as to the nature and characteristics of the product and the business. Stories and themes could also incorporate the importance of region. Even so, region was not a concept strongly utilised by participants; a matter that will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.4.3.3 Personnel sub-system

Personnel involves the selection, training and calibre of staff. For small venues on food and wine trails, the owner and family may well be the only personnel and, therefore, solely responsible for the delivery of the business's outputs. On the other hand, they might employ staff on a temporary basis. So personnel and training matters are important. No more so than for larger venues, such as major wineries on the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail, where personnel selection was identified as a very critical dimension. The outcomes of the trail cannot be met without the appointment of staff with a shared awareness of and commitment to the trail's goals. This includes the development of the appropriate skills and attitudes to accomplish such ends.

6.4.3.4 Beliefs sub-system

Beliefs involve enthusiasm for the outcomes of the trail and a commitment to tourism, quality, cooperation, mutual support and trust. This was referred to previously as group dedication (see section 5.3.5). Without a shared set of beliefs about the purpose of the trail and the role of each business within it, trails risk being undermined by lack of organisational commitment and hence poor performance of individual businesses, a point made particularly on the Farm Gate Trail but endorsed by the others.

Elements of the four subsystems identified—management, technology, beliefs and personnel—were developed and elaborated upon in Chapter Five. Different producers prioritised them differently. The totality of the system needs to be kept in mind when considering the performance factors that affect particular trails.

6.4.3.5 Trail outputs

The system identified in Figure 6.1 indicates that successful trail outcomes are generated through the outputs. To summarise these then; the principal outputs were successful coordination, as well as welcoming staff able to provide a story—physical, visual or verbal—to the tourist. Variety and quality of experience as well as responding to the tourist's need for experience with a valid 'story' were equally and vitally important to the business operators. Complementing these factors were tourist readiness, the willingness and capacity of businesses to deal with tourists as distinct from just customers there for a product. A warm welcome was also ranked very highly as well.

Other factors put forward as central were the need for coordination and contact with state and local agencies that might contribute resources or offer support in other ways (the impact of synergy). Furthermore, there was an insistence on quality as a theme.

It seems possible to incorporate the outputs into three key rubrics that succinctly identify the main concepts. They are organisation, presentation and representation. The use of such précised information will now be explained. Organisation is in the management of the trail. This covers the ideas of coordination and its associated issues. Presentation includes those activities which project the trail to the public; the story, staff responses, welcome, activities—the very essence of the experience for the tourist-consumer. Finally there is representation. While a consistent idea of region or territory holding a trail together—a theme in the ideas presented in the Literature Review (see section 3.1.1)—was not strongly identified, trail producers were committed to the idea of quality as a value to which they all subscribed. Themes were present, and they were utilised, but they did not seem consistent. Quality, however defined, was, in effect, the one constant theme. From a systems theory perspective, the ideas are presented in Figure 6.3 below.

6.4.3.6 Trail outcomes

From the perspective of systems theory, therefore (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2), a successful trail was outcomes-focused. It concentrated on the provision of positive outcomes for trail businesses and tourists. This did not necessarily mean selling a product. Yet, the research found that trail tourists were often ready to reward those businesses that provided a satisfactory experience by purchasing goods or services. Tourist-consumers wholeheartedly endorsed the notion of positive experience as the premier trail outcome. The business principals identified that the main outcome was an enjoyable experience. The findings also

indicate trail businesses are there for the revenue. There is strong commitment throughout the research to positive experience and revenue generation as the predominant successful outcomes.

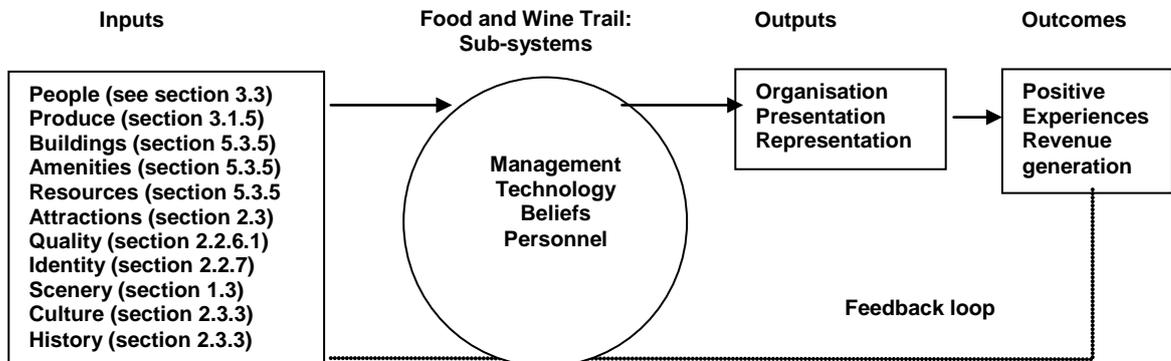


Figure 6.3: Food and wine trail sub-systems: outcomes/outputs

Overall, the performance factors are presented as in the text box that follows.

Conclusions 2

Important performance factors are:

- trail coordination; social capital and trust
- critical mass; people, product and promotion
- variety
- experience and stories
- tourist readiness and commitment
- quality
- promotion and theme
- agency support and regulation
- compliance costs

Principal performance factors were:

- variety and quality of experience for the tourist, in particular the availability of a story
- tourist readiness
- trail coordination

6.5 Research objective 3

Research objective 3 read as follows: understand the economic and tourism importance of food and wine trails and elaborate upon their critical components.

The research findings strongly support that food and wine trails can;

- bring tourists into a region that they have not visited before and might not have done so without the attraction of a trail,
- move tourists around a region,
- supplement income for the primary producers involved, and
- assist regional economies through the provision of custom to other local businesses.

Moreover, from the standpoint of the trail tourist, trails can individually and collectively provide satisfactory experiences.

These are successful outcomes for food and wine trails, and they are supported elsewhere throughout this chapter. However, care needs to be taken about the level at which such outcomes occur. The percentage of people who visited trails for the express purpose of being on a trail was quite low given the numbers of visitors to food and wine businesses overall; depending on the trail, up to 25 percent. A principal research finding is thus that trails are, for the most part, a niche activity for a limited market.

Many visitors to food and wine trail businesses had responded to other promotions. Some had foreknowledge of the businesses from other sources. For instance, it was found that many visitors to the venue on the Poachers Trail were there to eat at the restaurant, not just visit the premises as part of a trail. Indeed, one of the most significant findings of the research was that none of the businesses on trails were wholly dependent on the trail for the totality of their revenue. The Poachers Trail venue was one example. Similarly, it was found on the Barossa trail that large and small wineries alike had multiple means of selling product, the same for the food producers. On the Farm Gate Trail the businesses had other means of generating revenue. These included farmers markets and customised special events, for example. The trails supplemented producer revenue. This income enhancement was acceptable as long as the costs for trail involvement were lower than the additional returns. As one operator said of the revenue contribution of the trail to their business:

Possibly five per cent, it is minimal. That's why I have gone away a bit from putting a lot of time into it; because it is more than five per cent of our time. It requires a lot of hours and energy' (personal correspondence with the author).

Moreover, a number of people visiting the food and wine venues selected for this research were unaware that the businesses were part of a food and wine trail. In fact, the number that did know was relatively small. Furthermore, trail businesses could not often specify the numbers of people a trail actually brought to their door. They knew it worked because of what visitors said to them, or because the trail brochure was in evidence. However, the trail

was usually one of several means the businesses had to attract customers and they could not always be sure what motivation brought a particular tourist-consumer to their door. They did know that positive word-of-mouth communication had a positive affect. However, they did not always document numbers and revenue specific to each means. A variety of means was necessary for businesses to promote and sell product; a trail was but one of them. As long as the customers kept coming to the premises and/or the product was able to be sold somehow, producers did not always distinguish the particular worth and role of a trail from other methods. The understanding that trails are usually only one revenue source for the associated businesses neither minimises their importance nor underplays the importance of trails overall. A further finding was that trail businesses acknowledged the importance of trail participation to their bottom line. As noted, however, they could not always document that against the custom brought to their doors by other means.

6.5.1 Revenue contribution of trails

It was difficult to accurately assess the monetary value of trail businesses to their local economies. Yet trails worked. Businesses acknowledged their success. This was a significant finding of the research. Trails generated revenue. The businesses themselves neither made a distinction between general production and tourism income nor maintained such detail overall. Neither, for the most part, could local tourism authorities, although there is a very positive reference to such research below. In the Barossa case there was a number of large wineries of international renown on the trail. Their employment of local people was significant as was their commitment to tourism. The financial spin-off from tourism for other businesses in the area such as accommodation venues was similarly important. Barossa is a prime Australian tourist region. It would be difficult to overestimate the worth of tourism to the area and to the State of South Australia. Another central finding of the research is that trail businesses were aware of their contribution to local revenues and employment. This ranged from increased patronage at a bed-and-breakfast and a restaurant on the Poachers Trail, to a local store in the Farm Gate area, to caravan parks and large hotels in the Barossa. As one of the Poachers Trail participants commented,

For a recent submission we did, we did some fantastic analyses and the impact is almost scary about how much money the Poachers Trail could be conceivably bringing in. [The lowest estimate was over \$10 million] To \$35 million. I mean we're talking serious money. This came from research conducted by Tourism New South Wales (BP3: PT).

This is a significant indicator of trail performance.

6.5.2 The contribution of trails to tourism

This research shows that trails have two major advantages from a tourism standpoint. These relate directly to the reasons why businesses participate in them. First, trails have the capacity to bring tourists into areas. They can and do act as tourist attractions, particularly for areas that are remote from the mainstream. For the Poachers Trail and the Farm Gate Trail, this was paramount. Regions such as these, areas with few natural tourism assets such as national monuments and monoliths, no mountains and oceans nor constructed drawcards such as theme parks, need ways to attract tourists. Regions that are geographically peripheral to the mainstream of the countries to which they belong, and which may be peripheral climatically and environmentally, have difficulties with development overall (Butler 1996). The Farm Gate Trail is in a flat, dry farming landscape adjacent to areas of tourist interest but with little immediate appeal of its own. The Poachers Trail flanks the national capital and acts as a transit region for people heading back and forth. These trails need to draw people from neighbouring primary tourist zones for tourism is an important element of economic growth and stimulus. The trails investigated work to brand their areas as destinations. They attracted people. Evidence from the tourist-consumers suggests that they do respond to trail promotion and visited areas they might not necessarily have gone to otherwise.

The second important advantage is that trails move tourists around an area. This was particularly important for the Barossa which has little trouble attracting people to the region. The Barossa brand is significant, nationally and internationally. However, as the area has over 70 active cellar doors and many other food, wine and associated attractions, movement to and through them all is a challenge. It is certainly a problem for the tourism authority for it has to be seen to be responsive to all Barossa businesses. It is likewise a problem for the businesses themselves which need to be able to refer tourists onto other businesses confident in the knowledge that they will be treated properly. For Barossa businesses know that people are in the area for a day, two days, a week even more and their premises are definitely not going to be the only business visited. As a representative of one of the larger Barossa wineries said,

People walk in here ... and if we're their first port-of-call, we literally have to be the visitor information centre. We have to give them a map and they generally ask, Well, what should we do while we're here? What are you going to tell them? Don't go anywhere else, spend all your money here. That's not what they want; they want the experience of the Barossa. Therefore you have to recommend other wineries and that is something I think the Barossa does very well (BP3: BBB&WT).

The trail is thus a useful means of moving people on and around. A formal trail with agreed-upon and acknowledged standards helps get around both problems.

Conclusions 3

Food and wine trails can:

- Bring tourists into a region that they have not visited before and might not have done so without the attraction of a trail,
- Move tourists around a region,
- Supplement income for the primary producers involved,
- Assist regional economies through provision of custom to other local businesses.

Moreover:

- No trail business is wholly dependent on a trail for survival.
- Trail businesses had more than one means to generate revenue
- Food and wine tourism is essentially a niche product.

6.5.3 Critical components of trails

The following section looks at elements of trail performance that were flagged during the review of literature. Their relevance or lack of it became more apparent during the carriage of the research.

6.5.3.1 Region and theme

As indicated in the review of literature (see section 2.3.1), the concept of region is a fraught one. Region was an idea taken from Gatti and Incerti in Brunori and Rossi (2000) referred to earlier (section 1.5). Their suggestion was that a trail was a journey through a region, using the premises of the producers to explore the unique cuisine of the area. However, a finding of the research is that, except as a way of recognising administrative areas, regions did not feature prominently with principals on the Farm Gate and Poachers trails. They acknowledged the potential power of regions but did not relate this to the unique food or cuisine of the area nor to the success or otherwise of the trail. Neither of these trail areas, however, is strongly identified as a food and wine region; it thus appears to be something they were aiming towards. In effect, they see the trails as a means of projecting the idea of region. This is a task consistent with the ideas of Ray (1999a; 1999b; 2000) outlined earlier (see section 2.3.4). Specifically, the businesses on Poachers Trail, while they saw themselves as in a definite geographical area, were hard-pressed to say how that area could be identified

and presented. Their joint intention as a trail was to help define that. Business owners on the Farm Gate Trail did not seem to be able to outline what the region was, either geographically or culturally. They appeared to be working towards such an understanding from a food and wine standpoint. The trail was consistent with that aim.

Both these trails were thus distinct from the Barossa. It was the one area where the idea of a region resonated strongly in discussions with the business principals. The Barossa Valley is acknowledged as perhaps Australia's only unique regional food and wine area (Heuzenroeder 1999; Santich 1996). It has a distinctive Anglo-Germanic history and heritage. The food and wine businesses of the Barossa were aware that they were in a well-defined and historic region. The Barossa possesses a geographical indication (GI), a protected name and area, which identifies the wines from the Barossa Valley. Food can also be sold under an exclusive Barossa brand. Most people were aware of the historic and cultural origins of the Barossa, its Anglo-Germanic inheritance and traditions. One of the wineries involved in the research had a large public display area with static and video displays that elaborated upon the German family history and origins of the winery. "There is a long sense of tradition." (AA1) This is also consistent with Ray's ideas that pre-existing regions can be used as brands to valorise products (see section 2.3.4).

The name Barossa thus identifies a theme. Barossa is carried in the full name of the trail as are some of the area's main food and wine pre-occupations—meat, bread and wine. A principal intention of the trail is to capitalise on the brand—the region, its history and products—in order to keep tourists in the area. Certainly the wine and food businesses on the trail capitalised on the reputation of the brand Barossa to promote the sale of products, a process Ray referred to as cultural commoditisation (see section 2.3.3). For the most part, however, a trail was principally a means to draw people to and around those businesses that chose to present themselves in this way. In this respect the actual promotion of the trail and how people found out about it, was more an issue than the identity of the region itself. One of the producers commented on the Farm Gate Trail that it could be the purpose of a trail to develop the idea of regional food for that area. This is an idea consistent with the notion of using the cultural economy to promote identity (see section 2.3.3).

Farm Gate and Poachers trail participants thus did not have a strong understanding of region as it affected their work on the trail. Along with the Barossa trail participants, however, they generally identified the trail as quality driven although, as indicated in the review of

literature, quality is also a vexed question (see section 2.2.6) and it was not always clear what quality represented apart from a commitment to meet HACCP obligations. Yet, in the absence of a strong theme of region tying the trail together, quality stood as a value to which all business participants could and did subscribe.

6.5.3.2 Interpretation of trails

The Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail was the one trail of the three investigated wherein any attempt was to made to identify and utilise a consistent theme. The Barossa was recognised as a cultural-historical region, a point made in the previous section. It is not surprising then that this was the only trail where any coherent form of interpretation was presented. The large Barossa winery where the tourist-consumer research took place had a considerable space devoted to audio-visual presentations of the history of the region, and the German family that pioneered the winery in question. A small video presentation went along with a number of static displays in a room overlooking a creek that bore the iconic name of some of the winery's product, Jacobs Creek. At the food producer where the tourist-consumer surveys were handed out, it was impossible to avoid the named role of the famous producer but also her position in the history of the Barossa itself. The venue highlighted both. Another well-known trail winery, a name synonymous with fortified wines in Australia, also presented displays of its origins. They arranged public tours through their extensive historic winery building complex as well. The Barossa theme was taken up by a number of the smaller wineries on the trail as well, mainly though static pictorial displays. The Barossa as a region and theme was consistently used in interpretative displays.

This is not to say that the venues on the Poachers and Farm Gate trails did not use pictorial displays. They did. The difference was that the displays were about the winery or food establishment itself; they did not portray a constant theme or region. Pictures of old buildings and old machinery were in evidence as were photos of previous harvests and workers. One of the producers on the Farm Gate Trail said that she made available small static displays in order to engage visitors who were not otherwise involved in the main product of the business. The purpose of such displays was thus to entertain visitors while their friends or relatives were otherwise occupied. The main function of such material thus was diversion rather than information or expansion.

6.5.3.3 Trails as marketing mechanism, and tourism

The concept of trail as marketing device or trail as tourism attraction was highlighted in the review of literature (see section 3.1.5). From the previous paragraphs it is possible to assume

that many of the proprietors on trails see their involvement as participation in cooperative marketing mechanisms, that is, a joint means to sell product. Such cooperation generates more revenue than they could create independently. This assumption was highlighted in the review of literature where it was contrasted with the concept of a trail as a tourist product (Mason, Deery & O'Mahony 2008). The research confirms that businesses participate in a trail in order to improve their economic position through enhanced marketing. This point was expressed in a number of ways. 'Certainly from a participant's point of view ... there was a need for the group of us to become unified for the sake of getting a bigger bang for the buck for our marketing dollar' (BP2: SHT). This was a common attitude.

Yet on the other hand, tourism was recognised as an essential constituent of trails. Frochot (2000) has suggested that a food and wine trail can be a unifying theme for marketing, food, wine and tourism. This was obvious in the Barossa example outlined in the previous section. It was not as apparent in the Poachers and Farm Gate trails where a consistent theme was not evident. In these cases the device itself, the idea of travelling a trail or parts of it as part of a day out was obvious. Then there were those producers who, like the venues that saw a trail as helping create a region, were there because the trail helped create their brand. As one of the producers said:

I have to go with this passionate view in that tourism is a lever for us which we are all using, you wouldn't look at [my] products and say, Hey, tourism product there. I am looking to tourism as a method of creating my brand (BP3: PT).

And, as a follow-up from another member of the same trail, 'But we are relying on tourists, the people who are travelling' (BP4: PT.) One of the participants when asked to confirm that the motivation to join a trail had been to add value to the business added, 'And interest in the region as a tourism place' (BP2: FGT). So the importance of tourism was noted both from the point of view of simply responding to visitors and through the development of means whereby tourists can be actively attracted to an area.

Another element in marketing was added by the participation of large food and wine businesses on the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail. Such is the size and renown of a number of these businesses it became apparent that participation in a trail was possibly a minor part of their marketing activity and perhaps unnecessary in order to generate revenue. This point was put during interviews. One answer was as follows;

I think what makes the Barossa great is the wineries, and the great wineries of the Barossa. So those great wineries have to support the Barossa region and be

involved in things that promote the region as a whole. ... This is not just to benefit [us] as a brand, but to benefit the region (BP1: BBBWT).

This reflects a concern to boost tourism and the image of the region overall. There are also direct practical concerns about brand awareness in a highly competitive environment for wine, nationally and internationally. Any methods of bringing visitors to a winery were construed as valuable.

So I think [the trail] really helps. A lot of people that come, do know [us] but they might not be aware of our range of wines or the stories behind them. So people come away from here having learned more, and therefore it benefits the brand. Making sales along the way is part of that as well (BP3: BBBWT).

The decision to revamp the Barossa Butcher, Baker and Winemaker Trail into an activity based on an electronic smart-card also had the advantage of enabling more promotion and assessment of the product as a marketing device. Such change gives Barossa Tourism

... a commissionable product, a product that they can on sell, that they can basically use as a Barossa promotion that has some value to it. ... actually making this a product that not only has a value to it but you can actually get detail off, that you can actually monitor who are using it, how many people are coming through. And probably get more details about what else they are doing on their visit. It gives us capacity to get some detail back (BP1: BBBWT).

In the end it was not always easy to judge whether trail business participants always understood the conundrum between the trail as marketing mechanism and the trail as a tourism destination. This also lends support to the view contained in the review of literature that marketing of food within tourism is not well advanced in the marketing evolutionary cycle (see section 3.1.5).

6.5.3.4 Trail dimensions and affect on visitation

The issue of potential trail length was developed in the review of literature (see section 3.1.2). It was not possible from the data, however, to ascertain just how far tourists were prepared to travel in a day. For the Farm Gate Trail it was apparent that most people were staying locally, and were visiting one to three venues as part of a day out. This involved a distance of some 30 – 100 kilometres. This was similar for the Poachers Trail where it could be assumed that most people were on a day trip from Canberra or other nearby locale and travelling similar distances. Barossa was likewise. People either seemed to be staying locally and making short trips out or they were on a more extended day trip from Adelaide. While people were visiting one to four locations a day, they did not seem to be visiting venues in any particular order. It was not possible from the survey results to judge whether visitors were going to visit all venues on a trail.

The best conclusion to be drawn from the data available is that tourists were using their interest in food and wine as a means of directing their activities, usually on a daily basis and, much more often than not, in a motor vehicle. A daily sojourn around such areas would imply that tourists are most likely visiting between two and four venues in a day. The findings support that. This certainly does not preclude tourists visiting more venues or even travelling around over two or even more days. It does tend to preclude, however, the idea that tourists view food and wine trails as a major regional destination, that they intend travelling to and along them as a principal tourist objective. Unlike in Italy, for instance, where a trail is cited as a means to understanding the culture of a region (Arfini, Bertoli & Donati 2002). Food and wine trails in Australia are often a collection of individual agencies with little or no cohesion around a mutual theme or region. Australian trails thus appear to be more a means to an enjoyable experience based upon shared interests, eg. food and wine, rather than a contribution to broader understanding of local themes.

To address the issues raised in the review of literature about drive tourism (see section 2.2.7.3), the research findings indicate that most of the tourist-consumers for the Poachers and Farm Gate trails were day visitors, and drive tourists. They were usually visiting food and wine trail venues as part of a short break or holiday in the area. This also made them consistent with the definition provided by Hall and Mitchell (2001) and given in section 2.2.7.3. Drive tourists on short breaks were often the case in the Barossa as well. Many people came from Adelaide on a day or weekend visit. Nevertheless, the area did attract a number of drive tourists who were on more extended national and international holidays. Generally, food and wine trail visitations for people on the Poachers and Farm Gate trails were one attraction among a number in the area. For the Barossa, the strong destination pull of the area related to food and wine. The trail offered a means to organise such interests although the trail was not a strong component of the destination's offerings at the time.

6.5.3.6 Food and wine 'champions'

One of the intentions of the research was to consider the role of food and wine 'champions', community members whose expertise and standing in the field of food and wine could possibly impact upon the role of food and wine trails. There is no doubt they are important. A venue on the Barossa trail used for surveys was owned by a woman of significant national and international reputation in food. This did seem relevant to the popularity of that venue

but did not necessarily reflect on the success of the trail. Nevertheless, her name would have been instrumental in bringing people to the Barossa Valley itself.

Ray's work on neo-endogenous development and *animateurs* (see sections 2.3.3 & 2.3.4), and the work of other researchers such as Putnam (1993) on the importance of social capital, confirm the importance of local people with strong social capital. It is not necessary to have a high profile, although it might help. It is necessary to be able to gain trust and use networking as Putnam (1993) suggested. This research confirms that local people use social capital in order to develop and maintain food and wine trails. The value of 'champions' would seem, in part, to be accidental; there may well be areas which benefit from their status. What was purposeful, however, was the deliberate use made of social capital in the establishment of food and wine trails.

6.5.3.7 New conventions

The concepts of embeddedness and new conventions were brought out in the review of literature (see sections 2.2.5 & 2.2.6). They were seen as ways of understanding why people would visit food and wine trails, and how they would benefit. The research confirms the strength of embeddedness and the utility of new quality conventions (Renting, Marsden & Banks 2003). The responses of the phone interviewees are entirely consistent with the references in the review of literature to the changing nature of conventions (Murdoch 2000; Murdoch, Marsden & Banks 2000). Respondents support the idea that interactions over food and wine are driven by more than the rational economic demands of commerce (see section 2.2.6). The tourist-consumer is seeking value-laden information. It is not just a simple matter of price. They want to know more about the food and wine they are considering and they are generally interested in it in the terms described by Gralton and Vanclay (2005); that is, place, taste, production methods, environment *et al* (see section 2.2.6). For the most part this was to be obtained from direct face-to-face interactions with the personnel at the venue. This was not described by the tourist-consumers in terms of establishing new relationships between producer and consumer, a suggestion included in the 27 points put forward in the survey. But it was there nonetheless. It was in the exchange of information with knowing producers who were showing interest in them. This was considered an essential part of the nature of experience. It was also consistent with the views expressed about cultural tourism (see section 3.1.1) and the need for tourists to combine travel with learning (Nordin 2005).

Conclusions 4

Elaboration of trail concepts

- Region and theme are not powerful drivers of trails. The Barossa was an exception.
- Interpretation is not well-realised.
- Trails were generally seen as joint marketing mechanisms aimed at tourists, rather than as a distinct tourist attraction.
- Trail visitors were best described as short-break drive tourists who used food and wine to direct their activities.
- Food and wine champions were not much in evidence. The idea of social capital in the hands of local people was a more relevant concept.
- Embeddedness and new quality conventions were evident.

6.6 Research objective 4

Objective 4 read as follows: develop an awareness of the demography and expectations of tourist-consumers on food and wine trails.

This section will discuss, first, the demography of the tourist-consumers captured throughout this research. Second, the expectations that tourist-consumers have as visitors to food and wine trails will be considered.

6.6.1 Trail tourist-consumers

The tourist-consumers surveyed reflect a similar demography to those identified previously in research in this area (see section 2.2.7). There were mainly two types; the young and childfree with a relatively high disposable income, and the more mature, comfortable financially and similarly childfree. This dichotomy will be explored further in the next section.

A representative of this latter demographic explained her preoccupation with food and wine, and a willingness to visit food and wine places in the following terms:

Well, I think our age group really enjoys it. It is one of the nicer things of life isn't it now; to have a lovely glass of wine, to have a nice meal and be in good company. ... But when there is the two of you or if you are fortunate enough to go away with some friends, the four of you are like-minded and you don't mind the quietness in the car, or just looking out the window at the countryside (T/C5: PT).

There is confirmation that the food and wine tourist can be a well-educated professional with no children. Yet evidence was also presented to the contrary, particularly on the Farm Gate and Poachers trails (see section 5.5.1), where both older and less educated as well as even more highly educated people were in evidence. An important finding of this research, therefore, is that the common stereotype of food and wine tourist as affluent and educated, does not always apply. The nominal food and wine tourist is not always there because of an abiding interest in either food or drink. A finding of the research is that the nature of food and wine tourism is strongly affected by both the location and type of venue, and the principal source of the tourists. It is possible to draw two assumptions from this for tourist activities based upon food and wine:

- i. It would be unwise to assume the common food and wine tourist stereotype as a given in all circumstances
- ii. It would be impracticable to base all food and wine tourism on such a stereotype.

Tourists were positive about trail visits. Most were there for an experience and their responses were generally upbeat. They were not always, however. Their disquiet was often expressed in terms of the lack of an experience to savour. Overwhelmingly, and in concert with trail businesses, visitors indicated that the experience was paramount. The visits were *prima facie* about tasting food and wine in much the same way that visiting a cinema is about watching a movie. The purpose of watching a film, however, is entertainment and is part of an overall experience, a night out. Visiting a food and wine trail is similar in that the day out is an enjoyable experience, one made interesting by the possibility of visiting food and wine producers throughout an area. But it is not always just about the food and wine.

6.6.1.1 The tourist-consumer demographic

The tourists on the trail could not be tightly constrained by demographics or psychographics. The usual patterns of well-educated, well-resourced middle-aged people were replicated, but not always. Children were not strongly evidenced on the trails. The participants did usually group themselves as childless couples at either end of the age scale. They were often at the high end of the salary and education levels too. Many of the visitors were young and committed to food and wine as an interest, almost a preoccupation, but there were older people like that as well. Similarly there were older people, particularly on the Farm Gate Trail, who were only there because the trail offered them a chance to get out of their accommodation and do something different. In this way they confirmed the idea that trails

can determine travel patterns in an area. Some of these older people classified themselves as foodies, others seemed to be visitors for whom food and wine acted a drawcard, a way to navigate an area, but not an intense commitment. Categorisation is complex for these people. There is nothing in this research that gainsays the categories of people interested in food and wine as identified by the formative work of researchers such as Hjalager (2004; 2005; 2000; 2002), Ignatov (2003), Ignatov and Smith (2006) and Charters and Ali-Knight (2002). The people in such categories can all be identified in the interviews for this research. However, there is nothing in those classifications that strongly overlaps with the totality of visitors to food and wine trails as evidenced herein. In general the research supports the broad contention made in the review of literature that the motivation for food and wine tourists is very hard to assess (Frochot 2000). A presentation of a potential model for tourist-consumers will be developed later in this chapter (see section 6.6.2.3).

6.6.1.2 The nature of experience

A principal finding of the research was that experience is at the core of trail tourism. It was a persistent and consistent finding. Dimensions of experience are manifold and what is meant by it is not always easy to determine. The strength of using the word experience in the research was that people were able to read into it anything they chose. This was likewise a potential weakness. At times it could be difficult to assess just what people meant by the term. Fortunately, other aspects of the research, particularly the follow-up phone calls, enabled a deeper analysis of the use of the term. This research confirms that, for tourists, experience is everything; and experience is essentially interpersonal. While they might like the taste of a wine or admire a particular food product, it was in the interaction with knowledgeable and personable staff prepared to give visitors time and a welcome to communicate that the meaning of experience was grounded. This interaction was more than the casual byplay of people engaging in the purchase and sale of a bottle of milk at a corner store. The purposefulness of the visit, they were there as tourists, meant that people were acting their part in the host-guest relationship implicit in much tourism and hospitality (Zhang, Inbakaran & Jackson 2006). They were not there simply as buyers in a commercial relationship. This elemental observation is embedded in the following quotation.,

I just enjoy the friendliness of it... we don't have to solve the problems of the world. I just like to hear where they're coming from, what they're hoping to achieve. ... I can't buy all their produce and solve all their monetary problems. But that five minute relationship which you develop by talking to them, I enjoy it (T/C5: FGT)

What was it in the five minute relationship, the experience that people enjoyed? The phone interviews added considerably to this understanding. For some it was simple; it was in the capacity to just talk. People liked being given the legitimacy to converse with another human being, albeit one with knowledge and interests in some areas consistent with their own. This alone was an enjoyable experience. One phone respondent mentioned that she particularly liked the interaction because it really demanded nothing from her, something quite different to the usually pressured interactions of her day-to-day professional life. Others liked that they were warmly welcomed and not spoken down to, a particular concern of those encountering the potentially arcane arena of wine talk. This again reinforces the relaxed tourist nature of such visits. It also reinforces Frochot's (2003) observation that it is very difficult to know just why food and wine tourists are there and what they are seeking.

Many more visitors, however, valued the interaction because of the information exchanged. This appeared not to be just a one-way matter either. It was an exchange. Many businesses had their stories to tell (see section 2.3.7) but visitors want to tell their stories too. Tourist-consumers were there nominally for the wine or food but the importance of this was less in the product and more in the interaction about it. People are curious; they want to investigate, to know. They certainly purchased products but, as was mentioned earlier, they purchased the rights to retell the stories later. One visitor summed it up as, 'We bought some of the cheese and loved it. It worked both ways; he gave us a bit of his time and we gave him a bit of our money. But it's curiosity more than anything' (V4: FGT).

6.6.2 Food and wine interests of the tourist-consumer

The chart at the end of the tourist-consumer survey asked trail participants to tick any number of suggestions out of 27 that reflected what they prized about visiting food and wine businesses (see Appendix Two). The results were presented in section 5.6.2. 'An enjoyable experience' was nominated first reflecting, first and foremost, that visitors to food and wine trail businesses were there to enjoy themselves, to have a good time. They were tourists as well as potential consumers. The fact that such visitors are tourists first is reinforced by the fourth factor, that is, their visit was part of a larger attempt to explore the area. The prospect of sampling food (including regional produce), and wine tasting were keys to their tourism. Their focus was on journeys made around an area visiting the businesses on a food and wine trail. They also appear important to understanding why a trail is a means to exploration. Phone respondents on a number of occasions indicated their reason for visiting a trail was a

means of arranging a day's outing. It enabled them to follow a path designated by someone else, someone with information they did not possess. Thus they could be surprised and, hopefully from a trail perspective, delighted by what they found. This was also found in the Barossa region where Adelaide people would take visitors to the Barossa on a day trip. The trail was but a means of organising the day out.

A further question on the survey instrument requested the respondents to restate five answers they considered the most important from whatever number they had ticked from the original 27. The overall ranking when respondents were presented previously (see section 5.6.2) but is repeated here for convenience.

1. An enjoyable experience
2. Food tasting opportunities
3. Chance to explore the area
4. Wine tasting opportunities
5. A chance to learn new things about food and wine
6. Regional produce unique to this destination
7. Talking with the food/wine grower and staff
8. Meeting people who are welcoming
9. A destination not visited by mass tourists.

This distinction does not dramatically alter the choices made in the initial list. It reinforces the value of experience with food and wine being a key to understanding what such an experience could comprise. Similarly it bolsters the strong idea that people visit food and wine trails as part of a larger attempt at exploration, at having a day out looking around. It also begins to elaborate upon what constitutes an enjoyable experience for the tourist; tasting, learning, talking, meeting people who are welcoming. This links in with learning and information, a topic which will be taken up in the next section. Moreover, it reinforces the principal point raised by the trail businesses; it is about experience.

The next display highlights the factors of interest from a tourist-consumer standpoint.

Conclusions 5

Tourist-consumers are interested in:

- Experience
- Food and wine tasting
- Learning, education and information
- Exploration

Moreover

- The common stereotype of the food and wine tourist does not always apply
- Enjoyable experience is essentially interpersonal
- It is difficult to know what food and wine tourists are seeking

6.6.2.1 The tourist-consumer as learner

The importance of experience does not downplay the significance of learning *per se*, of actually getting information that was valued because it added to the visitor's store of knowledge. The research confirmed that some people were on trails to learn—about food, wine, the businesses and rural areas in general. They valued the chance to taste and talk, to consume and compare, to understand the process of growing, harvesting and preparing. In this they supported Sage's views (2003a; 2003b) about the strengths of close contact with food, wine and its producers that were expressed in the Introduction (see section 1.2).

In part, this is motivated by curiosity, a point expressed by the visitor previously quoted in section 6.6.1. For some people it was more than that, however. There were visitors who were not satisfied with the information available in conversation. Some wanted to know more than was possible at the venue they were attending. One noted that the premises they visited, for instance, could have been better suited to cope with the needs of curious tourists. There could have been more opportunities for seeing, touching and understanding. Another bore out this observation by saying that she would liked to have gone into the grapevines and been informed of what type of vines they were, how they were trellised, what the canopy did, how the vines were pruned and the like. Learning about foods and areas, about regions and wines through discussion, conversation and presentation was a premium for a number of visitors.

6.6.2.2 The tourist-consumer as explorer

Some visitors saw themselves as explorers. This is a finding of the research introduced in the review of literature (see section 3.1.2). It is also alluded to in categories such as Hjalager's (2004) concept of an existential tourist, although it is not strongly evident in other research.

The interest of these people went beyond food and wine into other areas, thematically and geographically. The trail was a means to take them places they might not have been before, an idea expressed by a number of visitors. It is also consistent with the ideas of Turnbull (2007) and Suvantola (2002) about paths and roads expressed in the review of literature. One person suggested that while she had lived in the area all her life she had not been aware of some of the places they had been to until they ventured onto the trail. It helped such people organise their days with a focus on something they were interested in but with a broader intent to see and discover as well. It enabled some to plan a day in the area with friends and relatives knowing full well that the map would lead them somewhere, and back. This echoes ideas (see section 3.1.2) of the appeal and romance of the road (Cassidy 2004; Gordon & Lane 2007; North 2005). A trail provides security yet also gives licence to adventure. The idea of exploration was confirmed in the strong sentiment expressed by some that they enjoyed the trail because they believed and hoped it might take them to places away from the normal, away from crowded tourist venues. Difference was sought, variety appreciated.

6.6.2.3 The trail tourist-consumer: an exploratory model

It is not the purpose of this research to revisit the categories identified in the previous section in search of a completely new tourist formulation. Still, another model is proposed because previous research (see section 2.2.7) does not adequately describe trail tourists. The main distinction being that they are not just food/wine aficionados. The preceding paragraphs describing this research locates trail tourists onto two broad continua. The first is between those who are there just as tourists, and people more broadly interested in food and wine. Second is between people who are mildly and more interested in food and wine. This finding distinguishes visitors on trails from other research subjects outlined in the review of literature. People on trails are tourists as much as anything. Trying to subdivide them all as variants of a mythical food and wine partisan seems futile. The model (Figure 6.3) that follows, attempts to explore that distinction.

Figure 6.3 divides the potential visitors up into four major segments along two axes: the food and wine traveller and tourist, and either mildly interested or more interested in either. This

is not to suggest that everyone would fit neatly into any of these categorisations. There would be overlap and duplication. But the distinctions do help to reconcile some of the differences among the visitors encountered. They also emphasise the tourist nature of a wine and food trail in contradistinction to the idea that all people on such trails are vitally involved in food and wine.

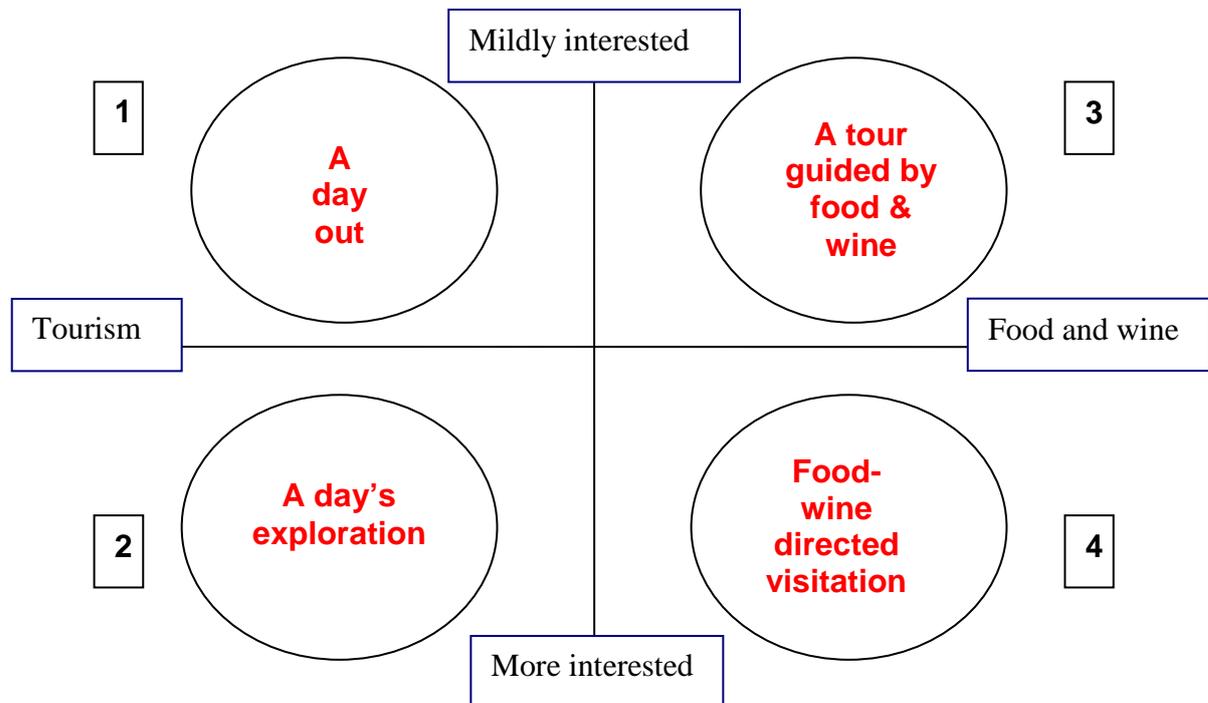


Figure 6.4: Trail tourists; a possible scenario

This simple diagram is based upon a finding of this research that trail visitors can be as much or more about tourism as they can be about food and wine. It needs to be noted again that this model relates to those that are purposefully on a trail and not just visiting a food and wine trail business. It may well apply to all food and wine visitors but this research cannot support that. Explicit trail travel was not very high compared to all visitors who attended at food and wine venues on trails. However, the explanations given for food and wine visitation in the review of literature (see section 2.2.7) do not necessarily explain the variety of people who are present on a food and wine trail.

The visitors were varied in demographics. Commitment to food, wine and tourism also varied. Some people interviewed for the research were simply there for a day out (group 1), perhaps as part of a family or friendship grouping. They might have just been brought along, or simply come for the ride. These are possibly the people Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) identified as wine novices or not really interested. They were along for the trip, to enjoy

company, the outdoors, perhaps eat good food, drink nice wine, laugh and relax with family and friends. Food and wine might have interested them not at all from a learning, information or discussion standpoint. Such people might just as well have been on a bushwalk or going to the zoo.

Group 2 was more explorative. They were there purposefully to look around, to have a day out in the country with friends or relatives. They might even reflect a little of Turnbull's (2007) preoccupations with the drawing power of trails as reflected in the Introduction (see section 1.3). Such people could have been staying, or even living, locally. They saw the trail as a way to investigate some of the region, to become familiar with local industry, agriculture, rurality, arts and crafts. The trail was thus a means to an end rather than food and wine information-laden. It was possibly no more or less helpful than a driving tour suggested by the local motoring authority, or a guided garden walk. This group could have been just as interested in the local museum and arts and crafts stores as they were in food and wine venues. All were a means to exploration. It would also be reasonable to assume that members of a party such as this could include members of Group One.

Group 3 is different. These are people who have an interest in food and wine. Maybe they cook, perhaps they like wine, or possibly they were raised on a farm or an environment that was home-provisioned. Food and wine feature in their lives. They are interested in food and wine provenance, at least to the extent that they will let a trail dictate a voyage through some of the more interesting food features of the landscape and follow them up.

Group 4, on the other hand, was committed. They were food and wine driven; maybe they would call themselves foodies. Their interests, however, were varied. One woman was vitally interested and knowledgeable about many aspects of rurality related to food growing and provisioning. Another was there because she was committed to bringing her child up in a more ecologically sound manner. Another was a cheese aficionado. Others again were dedicated wine tasters and comparers. Others were interested in food security matters. Individual motivations differed significantly (see section 5.3.4). They would go to perhaps one venue and that might be enough or they might go to more than one in a day and stay over more days to visit others. Their purpose was instructional and informative as well as enjoyment. They were really interested in food and/or wine, how and where it was grown, and what could be done with it. Many were foodies, some would even consider themselves gourmets.

6.7 Triangulating the findings: ancillary agents

Before considering the last of the research objectives, it is important to take into account the opinions of the ancillary agents. The opinions of the other two main groups, trail business and tourist-consumers, have already been considered in this chapter. The ancillary agent opinions were sought through the research as a means of gaining an independent source of opinion as distinct from those more directly involved in trails. They were thus a means to triangulate the research.

The ancillary agents gainsaid none of the principal findings established in this research to date. They supported the findings as presented. There were no real doubts expressed about the development and performance factors as articulated by the business principals and the tourist-consumers. They did look at some factors differently, however, a point that will now be discussed. To some extent the following findings reflect the bias towards tourist professionals in the sample of ancillary agents interviewed. Trails, however, are drawcards as has been shown. Tourist authorities at all levels are interested in providing such attractions and obtaining professional performance from the staff working within them.

The interests of the ancillary agents reflect a strong tourism-driven orientation towards destination provision. It also reflects the difficulty Australian tourism officials seem to have in pulling together joint and cooperative approaches to form destinations at a local/regional level. This was a point made previously in the review of literature when it was suggested that gaining cooperation among small businesses is not easy (Braun, McRae-Williams & Lowe 2005). The research findings emphasised this in relation to the Farm Gate Trail where coordination and agreement between trail members on certain issues appeared to be lacking.

In response to such ideas, Clark (2005) emphasised that agro-food businesses working in tourism need to, one, work closely with regulatory agencies, two, discuss their aims and ideals with each other and, three, maximise their economies of scope by emphasising natural phenomena and processes. These contentions are strongly supported by this research and are confirmed by one of the other ancillary agents who suggested:

... the benefit is that it does encourage people to work cooperatively. It encourages a sense of cooperation and people understanding the value of clusters of businesses. A lot of regions tend to struggle with that. A lot of businesses want to do things independently rather than work together, cooperate with others, realising that a joint message is more powerful than the individual (AA2).

Much of this interest in tourism reinforces the opinions of the business principals who articulated the importance of a trail joining together a variety of experiences for the tourist/consumer. One tourism authority, looking at it from another angle, suggested that

An individual business will struggle to gain recognition and awareness, in a crowded market place. A trail which promotes a range of experiences and opportunities is a more attractive proposition and allows the business to gain recognition that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain (AA10).

The interest of tourism authorities also incorporates a more centralist preoccupation.

... it is far more attractive to work with a cohesive group representing a bunch of businesses than having to deal with each of those operators individually - when it comes to workshops, marketing ops, participation in trade shows etc we will get a much greater return on investment dealing with a group than individual small businesses (AA10).

The ancillary agents reflected a somewhat idiosyncratic preoccupation with the performance of trails based upon their own interests, a hardly unexpected finding. Tourism authorities need to promote tourism; it is the reason for their existence. Trails provide a viable attraction. Accommodation establishments that depend on trails want to make sure they get custom from their involvement, as do other small businesses with back-linkages to trails. Local development agencies want to see results that justify their work. Trails are widely supported by such agents with the caveats noted above. Ancillary agents considered the points illustrated in the following display to be the most important.

Conclusions 6—Triangulation

The findings of the research were triangulated by the ancillary agents. They saw trails as relevant destinations albeit with certain caveats about performance. These were put forward in the Findings and largely related to:

- Coordination
- Resources
- Consistency
- Personnel (and training)

As with locating coordinators, obtaining funding to initiate trails was seen as a problematic area as well. Local and state tourism agencies did not usually see their role as providing ongoing funding for food and wine trails. That was left to the businesses. They were not averse to providing support more broadly for training and the like, however. One tourism official expressed it in terms that suggested his agency did not want to be seen picking winners, favouring some local businesses over others. This is quite valid from a government

standpoint but it leaves small businesses struggling to get a foothold in tourism at a disadvantage unless they can trust the dedication and commitment of other trail businesses. Large businesses with marketing budgets can usually afford contributions of this type.

Another element brought up by the ancillary agents was the matter of training. Again, this was largely brought forward by those agents who were also involved in tourism. While the trail businesses identified the matter of human resource training as important, the ancillary agents saw it as imperative if quality and delivery of the trail as a destination was to be maintained. The content of training was not particularly identified but it could be assumed from the ancillary agents that it would largely relate to customer service.

This completes the review of the findings related to the first four research objectives and confirms the findings through the opinions expressed by the ancillary agents. From what has gone before it is now possible to put forward a framework by which food and wine trails can be understood.

6.8 Research objective 5: a schematic framework

Research objective 5 read as follows: provide a schematic framework through which food and wine trails can be understood.

The factors previously identified can now be combined into a coherent schematic whole to represent the development and performance factors of food and wine trails. Figure 6.5 (that follows) is divided into four sections; development factors, performance factors, outputs and outcomes; the elements of which have been enlarged upon more completely in previous chapters and are based particularly upon figures 6.1, 6.2. and 6.3. Figure 6.5 posits in outline form the factors that would have to be considered by potential trail developers and trail participants.

Figure 6.5 is not a proscriptive mechanism. It should neither be read as a formula nor a theory. It is a practical descriptor of the elements that would need to be considered for potential trail participants to consider. Not all food and wine businesses interested in working on a trail will follow an identical route to participation. The decision to participate in a trail is going to be an idiosyncratic one; no two businesses will undergo the same process given that they are not going to be completely alike. Nevertheless, businesses wishing to participate in a food and wine trail, or establish one, will have to consider most if not all of the aspects

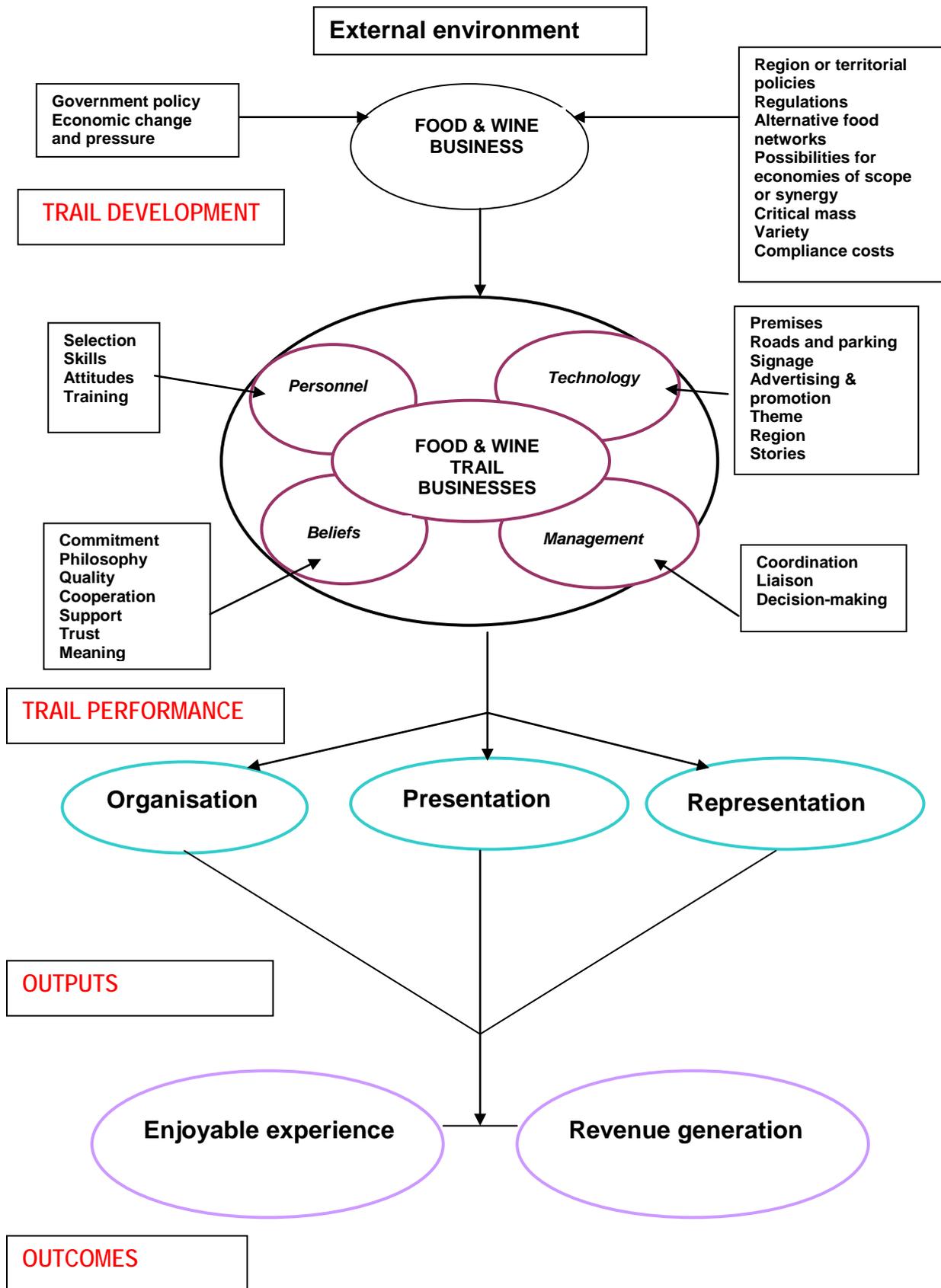


Figure 6.5: Framework for presentation of food and wine trails

contained in the diagram even if they might not have to spend equal time, energy and resources on each.

The external environment of a trail, the developmental factors, are diverse and will impact differently business to business, as has been discussed. In general, the principal development factor for food and wine trails has been the major changes to the rural economy brought about by changing international circumstances and altered government policy. Government policy of the time and particular economic prompts within the environment will affect each business in a different way. Some food and wine businesses have not had reason to alter their existing production and marketing practices, and have no need of trail participation. Others need to consider different arrangements and food and wine trails have been seen to be a means by which additional revenues can be generated.

For those who wish to consider the food and wine trail option the choice will depend upon matters within the local environment; the availability of a trail in the area (an alternative food network) or on the estimated capacity of an area to make one work. These things would have to be considered separately. Both, however, will be in part dependent upon the presence and interest of other businesses and agencies within the community with policies consistent with the development of such trails. Particular attention is drawn here to the presence of local, regional and state tourism agencies with a commitment to the role of food, wine and tourism. A commitment to food and wine tourism within a region is going to provide important philosophical support and justification, perhaps even resources, to a food and wine trail project. Local government, through its economic development policies, can be similarly interested in the development of food and wine trails as a means to promote local businesses and hence the local economy from which its rate base is drawn. Without such local support, practical or theoretical, the success of food and wine trails could be problematic.

The decision to begin a new trail is largely dependent upon local conditions and the willingness of a person or persons to establish it—an important and demanding task as has been indicated. While this latter point seems almost axiomatic the evidence of the trails researched suggests that it is important to have a person or persons, paid or unpaid, committed to the project. Such people need time, energy, some financial resources, and the social capital adequate to the task of uniting people in a common cause—a food and wine trail. Without such commitment and ability and, in particular, without social capital it is unlikely that sufficient trust and cooperation will be generated. In addition to the personnel

available to bring potential participants together it is necessary to consider the issue of critical mass; are there going to be enough businesses to justify the formation of a trail and, within those businesses, is there going to be adequate diversity to tempt tourists to visit and to keep them satisfied?

The decision to participate in an existing trail is going to be based upon the willingness of existing trail members to accept a new business. The prospective new business will need to decide on whether the costs of all forms of compliance (including adherence to beliefs) are judged to be less than the potential for income. The decision of existing trail members to accept or reject a potential new member is going to be largely based upon whether a new member can meet the requirements of participation and add to the impact of the trail overall.

The costs of compliance are not just monetary, although such financial outlay can be significant. They will be spread over the four sub-systems outlined in Figure 6.2, *viz* technology, management, personnel and beliefs. The cost of abiding by government regulations can also be considerable. Promotion and advertising can also involve cash disbursements. Yet, there are other than monetary outlays. There is the time and energy needed for coordination and liaison as well as the selection and training of staff if necessary. This implies a commitment to a shared set of beliefs and the willingness and ability to cooperate with other businesses. A shared set of beliefs about tourists and tourism is paramount. A trail is a tourist experience and not only a means to generate sales. Without such a commitment to tourism and all that means, it is difficult to see how trails can work. For instance, a key complaint put forward by trail operators is the unwillingness or inability of some participants to commit their businesses to be open on the times specified in their promotional material. This is believed to be detrimental to general tourist acceptance of a trail as an off-putting experience at one venue can have negative connotations for the trail at large. The willingness of small producers to be open when they say they will be has implications for staffing that can be telling in small, family-run businesses and this needs to be clarified at the outset.

The various sub-systems have been elaborated previously in this chapter. The performance of a trail will depend on a resolution of the issues derived from within the management, technological, personnel and value sub-systems. In some trails one or other of these subsystems may present more problems than others. Failure to resolve management issues means a potential difficulty in resolving most other issues. However, a failure to resolve

issues of belief can lead to ongoing discontent as was reported previously (see section 4.4.1).

Personnel can create ongoing problems. As one of the business participants said:

But there is someone who wants to join the trail right now whose product is seriously good, but we know that experience would be seriously bad....
We've all heard people who have been there as in visitors who have come from their place to ours and said, Holy Smoke, you wouldn't believe what happened to me (BP3: PT).

A consideration and resolution of all matters contained within the sub-systems will be necessary in order for a trail to operate successfully.

The main outputs as identified by the business participants and tourist-consumers will be a well organised and managed trail (organisation); one that provides an interesting experience and a warm welcome for visitors (presentation) and bestows a quality experience on a number of levels (representation).

6.9 Contribution of the thesis

To date, this is the second piece of formal research on food and wine trails in Australia; the first being a scoping study undertaken by the candidate (Mason, 2003). In the last decade, however, there has been an expansion in the number of such trails in Australia and elsewhere. This has highlighted a need for more information on this phenomenon and the research makes a noteworthy and timely contribution to this end by developing the corpus of knowledge on the topic. The research has added to the body of literature by extending our understanding of what is known about food and wine trails in Australia in a number of directions. That is, the research:

1. Presents a comprehensive mechanism for understanding the development and performance of food and wine trails.
2. Establishes the legitimacy of trails as subjects worthy of further academic study and exploration.
3. Substantiates the development and performance factors affecting food and wine trails in Australia.
4. Demonstrates the value and contribution of food and wine trails to businesses and local economies.
5. Provides grounded insights into the type and nature of the food and wine tourist including a ranking of what tourists value in food and wine trail experiences.
6. Yields information from which businesses interested in instigating new trails, or improving the performance of existing ones, can find direction and business planning advice relative to their potential engagement with tourists.
7. Imparts information to government and private agencies charged with working with such trails.
8. Brings together a significant body of literature.

The research contributes to the understanding of food and wine trails in the following particular ways.

First, trails work; they are effective in generating business income and satisfying the needs of tourists. They provide food and wine producers with additional revenue which can be quite significant. Without trails, a number of producers would not be able to augment their incomes in order to support their businesses and families. Trails are a serious if supplementary option for food and wine producers. They fall into the category of an alternative food network and they offer that option for interested food, wine and associated businesses. They enable food and wine producers to utilise economies of scope and synergy to take advantage of increasing interest in food and wine as objects of tourism.

Second, food and wine trails provide their local areas with other means to supplement incomes for small businesses. Food and wine trails stimulate additional income for other businesses within their regions through linkages to other food, wine and accommodation venues and tourist attractions. Small businesses in regional areas are just that, small. They are dependent on people coming into regions in order to survive. This research shows that food and wine trails have the capacity to bring tourists into regions, move them around and have them make use of other local facilities; accommodation houses, shops and recreation amenities.

Nevertheless, trails are a form of niche tourism. They provide a particular type of experience to a limited number of people. Yet their contribution can be significant in certain situations, notably in those areas that are not broadly conducive to tourism. Trails can attract tourists into and through regions to which they might not otherwise travel. They thus provide another means for tourism authorities to celebrate and promote their regions.

Third, trails provide tourists with a positive, enjoyable experience. This is a strong and persistent finding of this research. Food and wine trails are particularly relevant to those people for whom food and wine are major interests or for whom travelling local byways is important and enjoyable. The ability of food and wine trails to draw tourists to and around areas of the country that might not necessarily be attractive otherwise has been confirmed.

Fourth, not all trail tourists are necessarily committed to food and wine. They might be, yet this research suggests that the motivation for visiting food and wine trails can be as simple as a day out with friends. Assessing people on food and wine trails as part of some broader food

and wine touring cohort cannot always be valid. It might well be that visitors are on a food and wine trail as a means of exploring an area. A trail may well be a means to provide useful inspiration and guidance for local tourism more broadly. The idea of exploration is not much developed in the literature. It is a new finding that this research suggests is worthy of further consideration.

Fifth, Trails are a lively and worthwhile addition to the store of local and regional tourism possibilities. They are quintessentially a drive tourism option through which tourists can be a.) encouraged to visit and, b.) extend their stay in an area. Trails do encourage tourist retention in rural areas and hence promote economic development and contribute to regional improvement. These are all valuable factors in uncertain economic times.

Finally, the research gives context and meaning to the reasons why food and wine trails have been developed in recent decades. More importantly, it provides a framework by which people wishing to instigate food and wine trails can consider their options and assess the potential of their engagement with this tourist phenomenon. The research identified four component subsets for trail performance, namely, management, technologies, beliefs and personnel. These were consolidated from a larger range of performance factors derived from the research. These dimensions will not only be important to interested food and wine producers but will assist agencies such as local development or tourism bodies who could use the information to ascertain how they might usefully help and monitor the formation and function of trails.

It is important to note that trails are not isolated ventures. They are not just the product of one or two people or businesses interested in enhancing their revenue. They are of interest to local businesses, local government, state government and tourism authorities at all levels. As such, their existence is usually the result of a dynamic interplay between agencies. To date, however, there has been little material through which interested parties can assess the value and effectiveness of food and wine trails and enable the work of such trails to be supported.

This research has been exploratory. It has uncovered aspects of what else needs to be examined in order to further enhance the work of trails. The concepts developed through the diagrams in Chapter Six and the framework put forward in that chapter can act as a stimulus to direct further research.

Moreover, the research developed a substantial body of theoretical knowledge précised within the Literature Review. The review of literature was comprehensive because this was exploratory research and lacked a specific conceptual base with which to begin. As a result, the review of literature ranged over aspects as diverse as rural and regional development, economic and cultural change within Australia, alternative food networks, lifestyle, cultural and culinary tourism, gastronomy, group and individual identity, neo-endogenous development, drive tourism, human resource, organisational behaviour and management matters. The Literature Review stands as comprehensive collection of empirical studies relative to food and wine trails and is, therefore, in itself a contribution to knowledge in the area of food, wine and tourism that will be invaluable to future researchers in this or related fields.

The literature showed the breadth of studies that go into understanding food and wine trails in Australia. This study thus extends our understanding of food and wine trails, their development, performance and the motivations of those who seek to access them. This new knowledge is valuable in the Australian context but is capable of being generalised to provide deeper understanding of such phenomena more broadly.

6.9.1 Research limitations

A possible limitation of the research is in the small number of trails that were investigated. There are quite a few trails across Australia but, given the vast dimensions of the country, the difficulties of travel and the word limitations on this research, it was not feasible to research them all. The three chosen, however, were in the three states with analogous food and wine production statistics and the research design was such that the three trails were able to be compared. The sampling was thus generalisable. Certainly the number of tourist-consumers who participated in the research was significant and their contributions to the research were notable. This was particularly so given the distances that tourists can travel in Australia and the immense size of the country.

Given that little empirical research has been conducted on the food and wine trail phenomenon this study provides abundant grounded and relevant data on the subject. The data draws out key dimensions and elements critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails and presents them in a narrative that explains the key roles of trail business operators, tourist-consumers and ancillary agents. This leads on to implications for further research.

6.9.2 Research implications

There are a number of areas drawn from this research that could be the subject of further exploration. Specifically, the concept of the food and wine tourist needs further elucidation in the Australian context. Certainly the wine tourist has been well-covered. Indeed, there has been a lot of research conducted on wine tourism both in Australia and overseas. Given the high profile of wine as an economic resource in many countries, this is understandable. However, the food and wine tourist as presented in this research in Chapter Six, has not previously been explored. Given that this research indicates that the food tourist and the wine tourist are not always one and the same person this would seem an important area to pursue. Who are they and what are they bringing to and looking for in the culinary tourism experience? Their motivations could be the subject of further quantitative studies with a larger group of respondents.

The research did not bring together conclusive evidence on the relative and absolute amount of revenue that food and wine trails generate. It was found that food and wine trails do enhance producer income and they do so in two main ways. First, they supplement total revenue and, second, they improve the percentage of revenue retained for particular items. The latter point was particularly important for producers that normally sell product through commercial food chains and are forced to lower their per item price in order to maintain their market. The finding that producers use food and wine trails as but one means to generate extra revenue was compelling, however, and further research needs to be generated on the extent of such activities and the relative amounts (and associated costs) that such diverse participation involves.

Related to this is the need for more information on actual start-up costs and the revenue that would be needed to match them. Business participants indicated that the additional costs were often associated with publicity. Other figures were not developed though because the commencement costs were usually spent over time as the producer used whatever economies of scope could be brought to bear in order to generate further income. The amount of such costs was not identified. This is an area in need of further research.

The role of social capital in the coordination of food and wine trails also warrants more attention. The three trails were coordinated differently but it was apparent that the issue of social capital was important in each case. The interpersonal skills and prestige of the people involved seemed instrumental in the establishment of trails and this was regardless of

whether the initiator was paid or voluntary. It would appear useful if the dimensions of social capital helpful in trail coordination could be more completely mapped. Other items for further research could include theme and region; the former would seem to be much needed, the latter needs more consideration in the Australian setting for the reasons given in that section. Indeed it would seem possible to investigate any number of the performance factors listed in Chapter Five (see section 5.4) in particular, the means to develop and validate stories and how tourist readiness and commitment can best be understood and encouraged.

6.10 Recommendations

The findings of this research should be consolidated and made available to trail businesses and other bodies interested in the development and performance of trails.

1. A training package or toolkit to enable individual trail participants to assesses their performance and direction would be beneficial
2. Consideration needs to be given by government agencies at state and local level to develop ways in which trails could be given initial help to get started.
3. Opportunities should be sought through tourism and food and wine organisations to present the findings of this research to as many interested people as possible.
4. A register of trails should be developed across Australia and details be made available for cross-contact.
5. Local and state agencies should provide conference opportunities at which the findings of this research can be distributed and discussed.

Finally, food and wine trails have become important as a means to develop tourism and generate revenue for food and wine businesses across Australia. Moreover, tourists respond to them. It is highly likely that the growth in this phenomenon will continue to expand in the future and every opportunity should be taken to encourage and sustain such development.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Development of potential topic areas for discussion with trail businesses

Appendix Two: Survey for food and wine trail visitors

Appendix Three: Performance factors as determined by trail business principals for use in ranking

Appendix Four: Findings sent to ancillary agents prior to interview

Appendix Five: Sample brochure; Twin Rivers Farm-Food and Wine Trail

Appendix One

Development of potential topic areas for discussion with trail businesses

The factors developed through the review of literature and presented in tables 4.1 and 4.2 (see section 4.2) were formed into a series of themes in order to test their relevance with trail business operators. The straight exposition and utilisation of ideas as expressed in the Literature Review needed to be modified in order to make the content understandable to the respondent. This method also helped ascertain that the questions used in the interview process were understandable to the subjects. For, ‘... a question must be understood by the respondent in the way the researcher intended, and the answer must be understood by the researcher in the way the respondent intended’ (Foddy 1993, p. 23). This was a significant component of this phase of the research.

From the eleven development and five performance factors established in tables 4.1 and 4.2 the following themes emerged. The letter and number designations refer to the first columns in tables 4.1 and 4.2.

- Changing rural conditions and economic relevance of trails (D1, D2)
- The relevance of alternative food networks (D2,
- Who is the tourist and what do they want? (D3, D4, D7, D8, D9)
- The trail: is it a product, a service or an experience (D3, D4)
- Regionalism, identity and theme (D6, D7)
- Importance of government (D10)
- Cooperation with other agencies (D11)
- Roads and signs (P2)
- Promotion and advertising (P1, P3)
- Coordination (P4)
- Staffing (P5)

Early advocates of qualitative research proscribed the use of literature reviews prior to interview believing that such information had the potential to skew the data collection (Glaser & Strauss 1967). More recent opinion suggests that while it is necessary to remain open to the potential for innovation and change it is important to begin with some initial ideas (Esterberg 2002). This necessitated the development of a set of themes and open-ended questions for use with the owners/managers and staff of trail businesses.

The themes (above) were duly converted into a preliminary question format and subjected to pilot testing on a three business principals from the Twin Rivers Farm Food and Wine Trail in East Gippsland, Victoria. This was done in order to test the strength of the factors developed in the Literature Review. The East Gippsland trail and its component businesses had been the subject of preliminary graduate research by the candidate (Mason 2003).

The questions were initially structured as follows. The questions are numbered; the potential follow-up questions, if needed, are subset in note form after each numbered question.

1. How did the trail get started?
2. What prompted your business to become involved in the trail?
What did it offer your business?
Need to generate more income, alternative to standard food chains,
demand from consumers for different food, wine?
(advertising, reduced transport, reduced packaging)
3. How much of your business would be generated by your participation in the food and wine trail?
How do you sell the rest of your produce?
Does selling product via the trail affect your cost structures in any other ways?
4. What contribution does the trail make to the local economy?
What impact does the trail have locally?
(added income, greater tourist trade, reputation, accommodation stays)
5. What benefits do you get personally from working on the trail?
What are the costs to you?
6. How would you rate the road surface and conditions as important to the trail?
7. How would you rate the brochure as important to the trail?
Any other advertising done?
8. I'm a tourist. What's in the trail for me? What'll I get out of visiting this business?
(specific tourist attractions, learning possibilities or anything that would distinguish it from a normal retail outlet?)
9. Is it a tourist attraction and does it provide a tourist experience, or is it a means to market product and services?
Or both? Where would you place it on a scale?
10. Is there an over-riding theme behind the presentation of the trail as a tourist destination?
Is there enough diversity on the trail? Too much?
Is that important?
How would assess the length of the trail? Too long? Short?
Is that important?

11. Is there a regional identity that is capitalised upon?
Are you trying to develop one?
12. How do you conduct trail business? How do things get decided?
Does this work satisfactorily?
What makes this process work?
What gets in the way?
13. Do you have much contact with the other businesses on the trail?
Do you work in any complementary ways? Cross-promote ?
14. What about working with other businesses in the area?
Is this formal or informal?
15. What does quality mean to trail members?
How is it developed and ensured?
16. What is the role of local 'champions' (influential people)?
Do they exist? What role do they play? How important are they to the success of the trail?
17. How important are government agencies including local government and tourist bodies?
Does the local council assist you in any way?
What effect have they had on trail operation?
Impact of state regulations?
18. Does the work of the food and wine trail match other economic considerations of the area?
Does it fit with local tourism policies, for instance?
19. Who are the people that visit trail businesses?
How would you define your visitors? What do you think characterises them? (Age, gender, lifestyle, needs, place of residence, distance travelled, tourist or local?)
How do they get here? Any tour buses?
20. What motivates people to visit trail businesses?
(Something to do, better produce, healthy food, awareness of product?)
Do they all want the product or are they visiting you for some other reason?
Do they go away satisfied? How is that ascertained?
21. How important to you is the possibility of discussing your service/product with visitors?
How important do you think it is to them?
Do you provide special materials or services for your visitors? How would you describe your relationships with your visitors? What do you think it is based upon?
22. Has the presence of tourists meant that you have had to make changes in the way your business functions within the trail?
Customising for consumers?
23. How would you rate the success of the trail?

What are the critical factors in the success of food and wine trails?
What gets in the way of proper functioning?
What else does the trail need to work properly?
How would you rank the importance of such factors?

Appendix Two

Survey for food and wine trail visitors

The intent of the survey was twofold. The principal purpose was to generate opinions about food and wine trails in order to determine the factors important to the visitors. A secondary purpose was to uncover data on food and wine tourists. The main demographic data came earlier in the survey instrument, however. The survey was designed so that it could be filled in quickly and easily. Little information was sought that could not be gained through ticks and numbers. The questions were brief and wording was as simple as possible. This was done so that the surveys could be completed quickly.

As indicated in the review of literature, there is considerable information available about the wine tourist and his/her requirements. There is also a small but growing body of information on the food tourist. It was not considered necessary to generate such information anew, only compare it. The first part of the survey was mainly about demographic data. The questions were arranged to look at two things:

1. Who are the visitors in general, and do they conform to what is already known about food and wine tourists?
2. How many people likely follow food and wine trails? What are their origins, nature of visit, trip motivation, travel methods, distances and places travelled, and company?

It was not expected that all visitors to food and wine businesses surveyed would be participating in trail visitation. The original interviews with business principals indicated that they usually had more than one means to promote their products. Therefore people would often visit businesses on food and wine trails, but not as trail tourists. The data would help assess what the percentage of trail visitors might actually be.

There were thus survey elements that were aimed at the trail tourist only—as opposed to tourists in general. The demographic categories to describe the visitors in general were derived from previous research instruments that had proved successful in generating data about food and wine tourists (Sparks et al. 2005). Categories included the following: age; sex; background; place of residence via postcode; means of transport; lifestage; relationship status; education levels; individual and household income levels; nature of their visit; stimulus to, and reason for, their visit; and purchase patterns and motivation.

From understanding the demographics, the next step was to determine what visitors valued about their visits to food and wine businesses. This was the second part of the survey. A list of 27 values was developed. The values came out of the Literature Review and the prior interviews with trail business principals. The 27 items can be subsumed under the following nine headings:

1. The type of experience
 - An enjoyable experience
 - Opportunities for new experience
 - Like to be involved in participative experience
2. Importance of food and wine tasting
 - Food tasting opportunities
 - Wine tasting opportunities
3. Nature of the relationships between visitors, producers and staff
 - Positive interactions with customer service people
 - Meeting people who are welcoming
 - Establishing relations of trust with producers
 - Just like to talk about food and wine
4. Interest in healthy, safe, seasonal and sustainable foods
 - Regional produce unique to this destination
 - Freshness and quality not available elsewhere
 - Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce
 - Able to access seasonal food
 - Chance to consume/purchase safe produce
 - Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities
5. Impact of rurality and regions
 - Country visits remind me of my childhood
 - Opportunity to get in touch with nature
 - Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle
6. Learning, education and information
 - Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends
 - Talking with the food/wine grower and staff
 - A chance to learn new things about food and wine
7. The nature of trail tourism
 - The chance to explore the area
 - A destination not visited by mass tourism
8. Tourist transactions
 - Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper
 - An experience that will not cost me a lot of money
9. Roads and signage
 - Easy roads to get around
 - Adequate signage and information.

Some of the values could be included under more than one heading. They have been included here under the main heading they were established to analyse.

The respondents were originally invited to tick as many of these 27 values as they thought important. The object was to expose them to the 27 values so that their thinking about the potential responses would be broadened. After that, the next question asked the subject to nominate the five that were most important to them, and include others they thought pertinent. The purpose here was twofold. Firstly, it was intended to obviate any tendency to start ticking from the first choice down. Second, it was important to focus the choice to a reasonable number knowing that there would be a large number of surveys and that the results would be widespread.

Survey for Food and Wine Visitors

(tick or circle as appropriate)

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Address postcode: Or country of origin: _____
3. How would you best describe the purpose of your visit to this area?
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Weekend break | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Holiday | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Long-term traveler | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Regular customer—local | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Occasional customer—local | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Occasional customer—non-local | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
4. If you are a visitor, how long will you be staying in the area? _____ days
5. Are you traveling with others? Yes No
6. If Yes, what is your relationship to your traveling companions?
- | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Partner/spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> | Family | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | Business associates | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bus tour group | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | | | |
7. Are you in your own vehicle? Yes No
- If Yes, how far have you traveled to be here today? _____
- How many kilometres will you travel today, approximately? _____
8. Relationship status:
- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Married | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Couple | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single, never married | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Separated/divorced/widowed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. Lifestage: how would you best categorise your life situation?

- Young person (under age 35) living alone or sharing
- Young person (under age 35) living with parents
- Young couple (under age 35) no children
- Family - with children at home, average age 15 yrs and younger
- Family – with children at home, average age over 15
- Mature person (over 35) single
- Mature couple (age 35 +) either children left home or no children

10. Your age range:

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 15 – 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 45 – 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25 – 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 - 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35 – 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65 + | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Are you now in paid employment? Yes No

If Yes, full-time for 35 hours a week or more? Or part-time

If No, are you:

- Looking for work
- Non-worker
- Retired
- Home duties
- Student
- Other _____

12. Current or last occupation: _____

13. Individual income:
- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than \$20000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 001 – 70 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$20 000 – 30 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 70 001 – 100 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$30 001 - 40 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 100 001 – 150 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$40 001 – 50 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 150 000 plus | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. Total household income: Less than \$20000 50 001 – 70 000
 \$20 000 – 30 000 70 001 – 100 000
 \$30 001 - 40 000 100 001 – 150 000
 \$40 001 – 50 000 150 000 plus

15. Your education (highest level completed):

- Completed year 10 or less University/college degree
 Completed year 11 or 12 Post-graduate degree
 Certificate or diploma Other (please specify)
 Trade qualification _____

16. Are you visiting here as part of Butcher, Baker and Winemaker trail? Y N

(If Yes, please go to Q. 17 and continue. If No, please go to Q. 21)

17. Are you likely to visit other businesses on the trail while you are here? Y N
 If so, how many? 1 - 2 _____ 3 - 6 _____ More _____

18. How did you find out about this food and wine trail?

- From friends or relatives Saw road signage
 Came upon it on the internet Picked up the brochure
 From our accommodation At tourism office
 Read an article about it
 Other (please specify) _____

19. What motivated you to make this visit? (Feel free to tick more than one.)

- Something to do Understand local cuisine
 Interested in wine Look at the countryside/scenery
 Interested in rural matters Interested in food
 Explore the area by vehicle Accompany friends or relatives
 See more of the region Other (see Q. 20)

20. If other, please elaborate:

21. What do you value in such visits? (Tick as many as are appropriate.)

- An enjoyable experience
- Positive interactions with customer service people
- Food tasting opportunities
- Meeting people who are welcoming
- Opportunities to gain knowledge I can share with friends
- Regional produce unique to this destination
- Opportunities for new experience
- Country visits remind me of my youth/childhood
- Freshness and quality not available elsewhere
- Chance to consume/purchase healthy produce
- Easy roads to get around
- Talking with the food/wine grower and staff
- Opportunity to get in touch with nature
- The chance to explore the area
- Able to access seasonal food
- Establishing relations of trust with producers
- Just like to talk about food/wine
- Wine tasting opportunities
- Buying from the grower/cellar door is cheaper
- Chance to consume/purchase safe produce
- An experience that will not cost me a lot of money
- A chance to learn new things about food/wine
- A destination not visited by mass tourism
- Adequate signage and information
- Chance to understand more about rural lifestyle
- Like to be involved in a participative experience
- Want to engage in environmentally sustainable activities.

22. Of the items you have ticked in Q. 21, please rank those (five at most) that would be most important to you.

(a.) _____

(b.) _____

(c.) _____

(d.) _____

(e.) _____

23. If you are only visiting this one business (and not visiting others on the trail) what is the purpose of your visit here?

Tourist/visitor

Regular local customer

Local customer for casual purchase

Local business customer

Other (please specify) _____

24. How much are you prepared to spend here? (approximately) \$_____ And at other food and wine businesses while you are in the area? (approximately) \$_____

And, finally...

Thank you very much for your time and participation. Would you mind if we contacted you again to talk a little more about your food/wine experience? This is not mandatory but it would be a great help as your opinions are important to this research.

If Yes, your phone number _____ Email _____

And a contact name _____

The most appropriate day and time for us to call you? _____



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Appendix Three

Performance factors as determined by trail business principals for use in ranking



Appendix Four

Findings sent to ancillary agents prior to interview

Factors critical to the development and performance of food and wine trails in Australia

The research was done with two main groups: businesses on trails, and visitors. The trail businesses acknowledge that food and wine trails definitely can;

- Bring tourists into a region that they have not visited before and might not have done so without the attraction of a trail,
- Move tourists around a region,
- Supplement income for the primary producers involved,
- Assist regional economies through provision of custom to other local businesses.

The actual *development* factors for trails are predominantly economic. The massive changes to the agricultural sector and to Australian business in general over the last 20-30 years has meant that businesses big and small have had to look for other revenue options; food and wine trails are but one. Options will differ from business to business but the original stimulus, economic change, seems the same.

On the other hand the trail businesses suggest that the following are the key factors affecting the *performance* of trails.

1. Trail coordination; social capital and trust
2. Critical mass; people, products and promotion
3. Variety
4. Experience and stories
5. Tourist readiness and commitment
6. Quality
7. Promotion and theme
8. Agency support and regulation
9. Region
10. Compliance costs

The last business respondents, asked to prioritise the above list, said that variety, quality of experience, and responding to the tourist's need for experience with a valid 'story' were equally and vitally important. Complementing these factors were tourist readiness, the willingness and capacity of businesses to deal with tourists as distinct from just customers there for a product. A warm welcome was also ranked highly.

Trail visitors were given a list of 27 factors that that were possibly critical to their enjoyment of the trail experience. They prioritised the following nine.

1. An enjoyable experience
2. Wine tasting opportunities
3. Food tasting opportunities
4. A chance to learn new things about food and wine
5. Regional produce unique to this destination
6. Talking with the food/wine grower and staff
7. Meeting people who are welcoming
8. The chance to explore the area
9. A destination not visited by mass tourism

Appendix Five

Sample food and wine trail brochure

