

Scoping Study

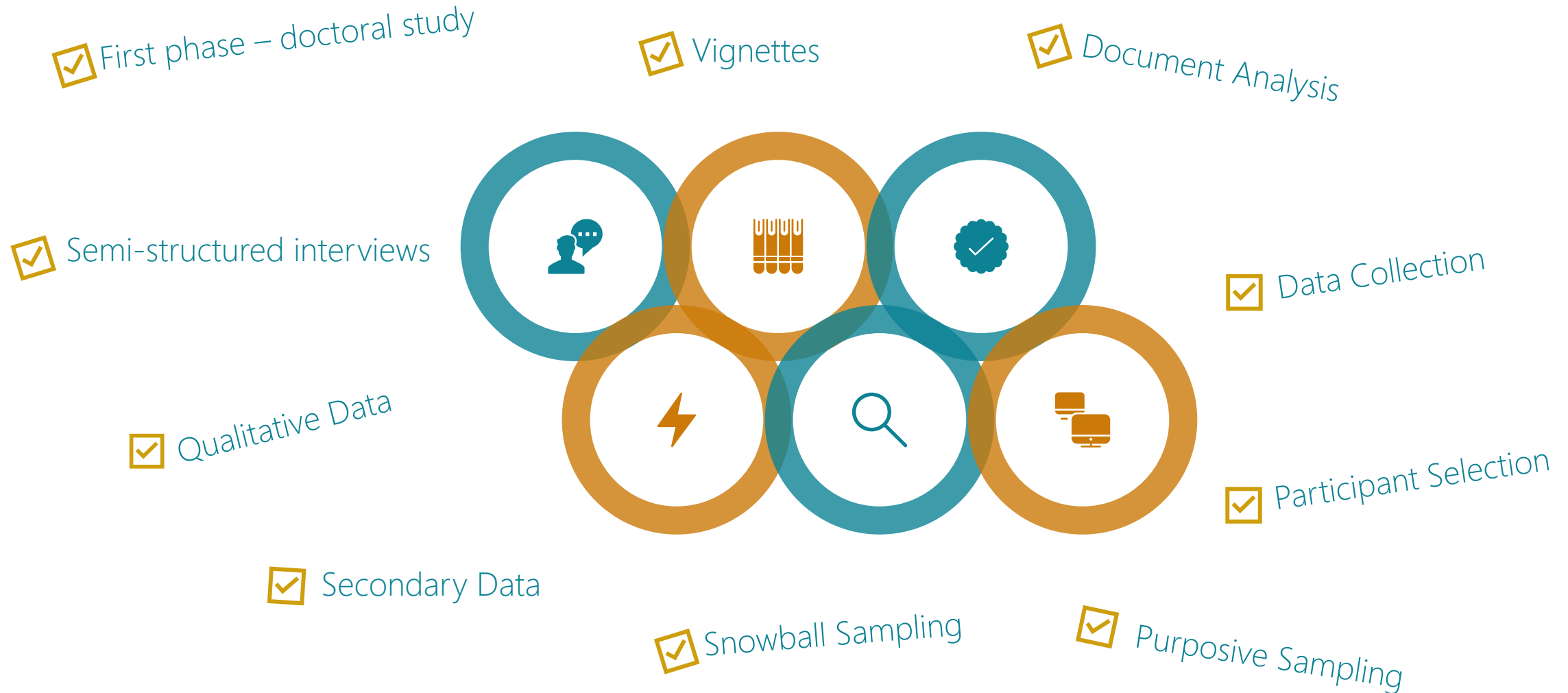
Interviews and Document Analysis

Project: Phase I – Doctoral Research Study

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Thank you to all participants!

Scoping Study



Section II: The Scoping Study's Research Design and an Introduction to the Cottage Food Industry in Tasmanian Agriculture

This section describes *how* the scoping study was undertaken and offers a series of eight vignettes to *introduce* the diversity and issues within the cottage food industry in Tasmanian agriculture. Five of the vignette industries presented here were interviewed, whilst three were developed through informal conversations and a scanning of the documents.

The aim of the preliminary data collection phase was to immerse the researcher and project in information surrounding both the phenomenon under investigation (i.e. the cottage food industry, identity preservation and enterprise expansion) and the context. The methods of data collection included scanning of documents and semi-structured interviewing the participants in which involved a number of key informants from a diverse range of cottage industries. The key informants were interviewed and a series of vignettes were developed. The interviewing of key informants occurred because of their awareness of the industry and their ability to name additional participants to be interviewed (i.e. snowball sampling).

Data Collection

The research methods chosen and the participants selected were based on the aims of the scoping study: that is, to introduce the industry and discover the salient issues, actors and related concepts. Thus, the use of semi-structured interviews were considered essential data collection tools since they allowed the participant to talk freely and the researcher to pursue other information that would have otherwise remained unknown. This format was used during the interviewing of both the key informants and the vignette participants. Interviewing provided predominantly qualitative data, which enabled understanding "based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1994, p. 2). A significant amount of secondary data was also gathered via document research through the examination of newspapers, the Internet, and tourist brochures. This was also principally qualitative in nature.

The purpose of the preliminary study also directed the sampling of participants. That is, all participants were purposively selected. Key informants were selected on the basis of

their familiarity with the industry, whilst vignettes were selected to showcase the diversity within the industry.

Participant Selection

The participants chosen for the initial data collection phase were purposively selected for their local knowledge and ability to provide information-rich data. *Purposive sampling* is a technique used to select participants who are "especially informative" and *enable more in-depth understanding*, rather than providing generalisations (Neuman, 2000, p.198). Participants were initially sourced by scanning documents (e.g. local newspapers, food and wine guides, and web sites), word-of-mouth, and on-site visitations of local produce markets and retail outlets. The key informants provided *their* understandings of what it *means* to be a cottage industry, the background to the industry, and important issues concerning the industry.

Whilst interviewing, particularly the key informants, participants were asked to recommend other information-rich and/or similar actors who could potentially act as participants for the first and second data collection phases. This produced a form of *snowball sampling*, where the earlier cases in the sample assist in the identification of additional sample participants (Sullivan, 1992). Snowball sampling is advantageous when there is no other method for finding the research participants (Glesne, 1999) and proved particularly useful in this scenario because of the lack of existing knowledge surrounding the industry. The key informants interviewed included a director of a rural development agency, a product development consultant in the state government's tourism department, a radio reporter on rural issues, a local food writer, and a representative of a federal government department which is the principal supporting agency for industry.

The enterprises in the vignettes that were purposively selected to feature in the scoping study's Section II presented here included: one wine processor; one cheese processor; and, six jam processors. Initially a database of possible participants was developed from scan of documents (tourist brochures, newspapers, the Internet) and snowball sampling. *This database* guided not only the vignette sampling, but also the purposive sampling of the case studies in the main methodology. In relation to the vignette participants, sampling was conducted in order to demonstrate the diversity within the industry and discover the widest range of related issues and concepts as possible. Such differences included the methods of selling employed, the geographical area they sold in, and other business activities that the enterprises conduct (see Table 2.2). However, the vignette

participants were also selected on their similarities (such as size of business, non-commercial look of the label, and descriptors used in relation to the products and businesses), which largely were responsible for grouping them as cottage enterprises.

TABLE 2.2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VIGNETTES

| Vignette | Food Product | Other Business Activities | Raw Product Sourced | Method of Selling/ Distribution | Geographical Area Sold |
|----------|--------------|--|---------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Wine | None | On-farm | Only cellar door | On-farm only |
| 2 | Cheese | wool, beef, cereal, strawberry runners, specialist | Sub-regional | National/Intern'l distribution (1 local outlet) | Up to international |
| 3 | Jam | B&B | Sub-regional | Through B&B; on-site; other small, local retailers | Sub-regional |
| 4 | Jam | Hand made gifts/souvenirs (retired) | Backyard | Through Post Office only (weekends only) | A few kilometres from house |
| 5 | Jam | B&B | Sub-regional | Through B&B; on-site | On-site |
| 6 | Jam | Raw product (retired) | Sub-regional | In Van on road | Sub-regional |
| 7 | Jam | Commission basis (retired) | All areas | Through charity/fund raising shops | Sub-regional |
| 8 | Jam | None (retired) | Backyard | Only at market | Sub-regional |

Research Methods

The research methods employed in the initial phase of data collection were participant observation (in the sense of visiting local food and wine markets and on-site visits), scan of documents and semi-structured interviews. By visiting a number of local food and wine produce markets and points of sale, I closely aligned with Glesne's (1999, p.44) "observer as participant". This not only assisted me in further understanding those participants involved in the study but also the context and other important issues and concepts. In addition to this, a number of local fine food shops were scanned for produce in order to identify other potential participants.

Scanning documents was chosen because of the ability to: utilise "existing sources" (Kellehear, 1993, p.51); gather additional data unobtrusively; and, identify additional

participants. Moreover, by using data present in existing documents and crosschecking this data, trustworthiness is enhanced (Glesne, 1999, p.58). That is, by using multiple research methods/sources data can be verified, thereby adding to the validity of the research. Owing to Tasmania's active food, wine and tourist industry, ample tourist brochures and guides were available from which to source relevant information. Local newspapers and participants' websites were also found to offer industry-relevant information and data on participants.

The *semi-structured interview* or semi-standardised interview was chosen because of the need to deviate and 'probe' beyond the interview schedule (Berg, 1998, p.61). The semi-structured format was considered appropriate because of the goal of data collection (i.e. scoping) and the lack of existing information/researcher's knowledge on the topic. That is, this format enabled the researcher the "free[dom] to pursue other lines of inquiry that seem[ed] fruitful" (Sullivan, 1992, p.128) and offered the opportunity for the participant to feel that they could volunteer information. Thus, despite having certain concepts that were felt to be significant (i.e. included in the prompt sheet) many of the interviews were conversational in style. This relaxed participants and built rapport. The interviews with key informants and vignettes lasted between 30-60 minutes. The interview schedules were adapted in each case, depending on who was being interviewed and their background.

Design of Instruments

The prompt sheet for the key informants and principals (i.e. the owner-operators of the cottage industries) was framed around the notion that this was a scoping study and a range of information needed to be gathered. The prompt sheet was also, in part, guided by prior background reading. Of course, reading within the literature had taken place prior to the initial data collection phase; however, without possessing an in-depth knowledge of the industry and the salient issues, a narrowing of the topic could not be performed. The prompt sheet was not seen as limiting the breath of data collected due to the use of a second data collection method (i.e. scan of documents) and the nature of the semi-structured interview to probe for, or follow, other lines of data.

The prompt sheet differed between the key informants and the participant enterprises; however, many of the questions surrounded the same set of issues and concepts. In this early phase, the prompt sheet reflected the intended aim of data collection, which was to develop a series of vignettes, uncover salient issues and provide contextual

information (see Appendix B). The familiarity of the key informants with contextual information directed the construction of their prompt sheets (see Appendix A).

Critique of the Methodology

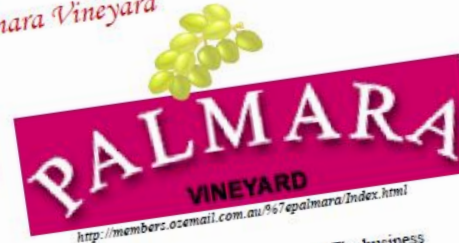
This scoping study was partly aimed at discovering the broader picture. The goal was to immerse the researcher in data and findings and to direct the literature review and the second data collection phase. Thus, it is acknowledged that this data is not thought of as representative and can not be used to base generalisations upon.

The use of snowball and purposive sampling in selecting the vignettes aimed to demonstrate the diversity within the industry. One of the major drawbacks with purposive and snowball sampling, which are both forms of non-probability sampling, is that there is an uncertainty as to the extent and the type of bias that are present (Sullivan, 1992, p. 47). In confronting this weakness, the researcher has attempted to rid the scoping study of any potential bias by interviewing key informants from diverse backgrounds. Another area where potential bias could occur was in the scanning of documents (Kellehear, 1993). By collecting data using other research methods (e.g. interviews and visitations), rather than just the scanning of documents, "cross-checking" for potential bias and inconsistencies was possible (Kellehear, 1993, p.62).

This section introduced *how* the research was conducted in the preliminary scoping study (i.e. data collection phase one). The research methods used; the type of data collected; and the sampling of participants were described. The following will introduce the cottage food industry in Tasmanian agriculture by presenting a series of vignettes that were developed.

Vignette 1: Palmara Vineyard

Palmara Vineyard is named after the initials of each member of the Bird family. The vineyard is "one of Tasmania's smallest vineyards and hands-on wineries" (The Sunday Tasmanian, 2003). The business produces approximately 250 – 300 dozen bottles of wine annually. Allan Bird grows, picks, maintains and processes all wines on-site.



<http://members.ozemail.com.au/%7epalmara/index.html>



Coal River Valley

100% Tasmanian Wine

The grapes are hand picked, immediately crushed, destemmed and fermented. Whole bunches are added for increased complexity. After pressing in our small bucket press, the new wine is matured in French oak

Tasmania's smallest boutique vineyard

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/%7epalmara/index.html>

Vignette 2: Tasmanian Highland Cheese

Tasmanian Highland Cheeses is owned by John and Jill Bignell. The business is located on the family's farm at Thorpe Farm, Bothwell. Thorpe Farm was established in 1823 and John is a sixth generation Tasmanian farmer. Tasmanian Highland Cheeses produces approximately five to ten tonnes of goat and sheepcheese annually. Cheeses produced on the farm include Fresh, White Mould and Hard Cheese. John suggests that his cheeses are distinct because they are "farmhouse", "artisan", and simply because they are made from goat and sheeppmilk.



*Handmade Goat Cheese
Product of Tasmania
Clyde River Chevre*

Vignette 3: Norfolk Bay Convict Station



<http://www.convictstation.com>

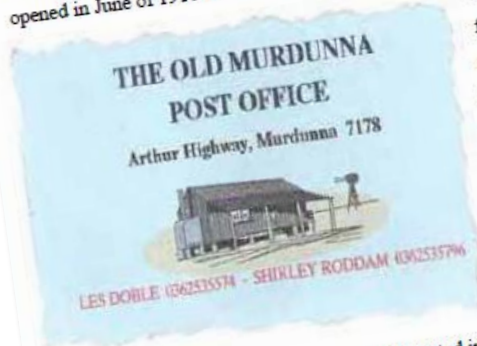
Norfolk Bay Convict Station Bed and Breakfast is owned and operated by Dorothy and Mike Evans. Both are originally from England and are ex-botanists. Dorothy also has a teaching qualification and an MBA. Before working as interpretation guides at Port Arthur, the pair lived in various places around the world. In 1998 they bought the Norfolk Bay Convict Station (their first business) and began repairing it with the assistance of a Cultural Heritage Project grant from the Australian Department of Environment and Heritage. The couple describe the B&B as a "lifestyle business" (www.convictstation.com).

The building was constructed by convicts in 1838 and was Australia's first railway station. Originally a safer option than ship, it was used as a way of getting goods and passengers from Hobart to Port Arthur. Cargo was unloaded at the Norfolk Bay Convict Station and then pushed eight



Vignette 4: Highway Jams at The Old Murdunna Post Office (1910 – 1969)

Les and Anne Doble, and daughter Shirley, are the team behind the business being carried out at The Old Murdunna Post Office. The Old Murdunna Post Office originally opened in June of 1910 and closed in September of 1969. The building, approximately 3m² in size and with no facilities (i.e. electricity, water), is now used to sell processed food items and a range of gifts and souvenirs.



Anne and Shirley make the delicious jams, most of the time, and Les, a very skilled craftsman, creates the gifts and souvenirs (such as brass items and coins mounted in various Tasmanian wood).

The family came out from England in 1966 and, over the years, have had a number of businesses; all of which were based around Les's trade as a diemaker. The couple eventually retired from the business and handed it over to their son (www.doble.com.au).

Vignette 5: Blue Bell Inn

The Blue Bell Inn of Sorell, operated by Barry and Marlene Gooding, has a rich and diverse past. Originally built in 1829 and rebuilt in 1863, after being destroyed by fire, the building has been a maternity hospital, private residence, drill hall, and, finally, in 1992 became an Inn. The Inn is currently operating as a Bed & Breakfast (five rooms) and a casual, fine dining restaurant.



www.rcat.asn.au/bluebell/index.htm

Marlene and Barry leased the Inn in 1998; coming from the mainland and a business background. Marlene's qualifications (i.e. Advanced Certificate in Hospitality Operations and Graduate Diploma in Industry Education and Training) and Barry's previous business experience have proved invaluable over the seven years they have run the business.



Originally only processing agricultural produce for the restaurant and B&B, patrons repeatedly asked to purchase the products. As a result, they began displaying produce, such

Vignette 6: The Food Van Brigade



The Food Van Brigade, as I have termed them, is the group of trucks that park on the edge of roads/highways and sell agricultural produce. In Tasmania, these trucks are out in force over the summer, when the stone fruit and berries are in season. However, there are some that sell produce all year round.



The brigade often sells excess fruit which has been either grown by their own hands, by relations, or by friends. Very occasionally you come across trucks that also make their



Vignette 7: The Fund Raisers

One type of small-scale food processor in Tasmanian agriculture is the person that makes jams, chutneys, relishes, etc to raise money for charities and causes. These processors receive a commission on any product sold. The products are sold in shops



like the Lindisfarne CWA (Country Women's Association) pictured below and The Anglican Little Shop. Some of the charities the Anglican shop donate to include the Salvation Army, Mission Australia, Short Street Rehabilitation Centre and the premature baby unit in the Royal Hobart Hospital (Sunday Tasmanian, 2004).

Vignette 8: The Markets

One type of small-scale food processor in Tasmanian agriculture is the unit that sells exclusively at the local markets. These markets sell everything from agricultural produce to craft to second hand goods. Each weekend, right around the state, these markets take place. They are not only a cheap method of selling wares, but also offer a significant socialisation component to all involved. Similar to the farmers' markets that are growing in popularity worldwide, the Tasmanian markets often sell a diverse range of goodies.



A common sight at one of the local markets

Apart from these local markets, there are a large number of festivals each year in which many small-scale processors are featured.

Conclusions and Linking the Scoping Study to the Literature Review

The scoping study set out to discover the issues, actors and concepts surrounding the research problem (i.e. the paradox of expansion); to gain a preliminary understanding of the research problem; to focus the research; and to add validity to the overall findings. The scoping study findings are used in the following chapter (Chapter 3) to guide the literature review and subsequently develop the project's research questions. In so doing, this chapter presented: a contextual background to the study (Section I); the scoping study research design and a set of eight vignettes, which included a range of different types of cottage industries in Tasmanian agriculture (Section II) and presented a number of findings (Section III). The following overviews these findings and presents the implications in relation to the literature to be reviewed in the following chapter.

- 1. The enterprises and other actors informally label the vignettes and other businesses as cottage industries.*

The first finding supported the thesis that the cottage enterprise label is used by the enterprises themselves and also attached to these industries by other actors. The label/identity is informally assigned in that it is not an officially certified label. This finding will direct the exploration and development of the defining characteristics of a cottage industry. This will enable the investigation of the appropriateness of the cottage industry tag as an informal label.

- 2. These industries and other actors view their units and products as artisanal/hand made (i.e. informally label them as such).*

The scoping study revealed that the artisanal/handmade descriptor is another identity attached to the industry under study. Once again, this label is informally attached to the enterprises and their products. Thus, the concept of artisanality is examined within the literature and a number of characteristics of artisanality are developed. This allows for a further investigation into the artisanal identity/informal label and its appropriateness as assigned to the enterprises under study.

- 3. Larger enterprises which have evidently expanded, and their products, are also viewed as artisanal (i.e. artisanal identity preservation).*

The scoping study revealed that larger enterprises within Tasmanian agriculture also use and also assigned the artisanal descriptor.

4. The industry's products are viewed as quality food products.

The industry's products are viewed as quality food products and quality can encompass a wide variety of meanings. This finding guides an examination of the extensive literature that surrounds quality as it relates to the agrifood industry.

5. Food safety legislation as an aspect of food quality is a significant issue that a segment of the industry is encountering (i.e. product labelling).

Food safety, as a notion of quality, is a significant issue for the food processing industry in Tasmanian agriculture, particularly the small-scale units. Apart from reviewing literature surrounding the context of the emphasis on food safety by government, private industry and consumers alike, the view that food safety is dominating the food quality discourse will also guide the literature review in the following chapter.

6. The vignettes and other businesses within the industry produce smaller/lower quantities of product.

The scoping study revealed that the vignette industries featured here do not produce economies of scale. As such, an examination of economies of scale operations and other structures of agrifood businesses and their differences will be explored in the following chapter.

7. The bulk of the business activities of these enterprises are geographically concentrated within the sub-regional area.

- *The enterprises often perform other types of business activities;*
- *A portion of enterprises produce all/part of the raw agricultural produce versus purchasing the raw product;*
- *Many of the businesses are on a Tasmanian tourist trail and sell farm gate/cellar door (i.e. direct marketing/short food miles).*

The finding that the vignettes' activities are geographically confined, for the most part, within the sub-regional area of Tasmania will guide the examination of literature. This will include such literature surrounding food supply chains, place branding and direct sales. Moreover, the finding that some of these enterprises perform other business activities and are responsible for the entire food supply chain (from raw agricultural production to sales) will direct literature surrounding pluriactivity and alternative agrifood business types.

8. Due to a significant growth in certain sub-sectors, there are issues related to increased competition within the local market (i.e. local product saturation).

The finding that local product saturation is occurring in specific sub-sectors relates to the development of the cottage industry in Tasmanian agriculture and consumption trends. Thus, trends surrounding production and consumption within the agrifood industry will be examined in the literature review. Moreover, because enterprise and industry expansion indicates development of the cottage food industry in Tasmanian agriculture, literature surrounding regional agrifood development and associated models will also be examined.

The following chapter will draw upon these findings in order to guide a review of the relevant literature surrounding the research problem. The scoping study does not seek to provide a complete picture of the literature to be reviewed; rather, it offers a starting point and a guide for focusing the review. The literature review is primarily contextual in nature; that is, this type of review places the "specific project in the big picture" (Neuman, 2000, p.446). In giving meaning to present day activities and current trends, a historical context is also necessary. Thus, the literature review will not only provide an examination of the concepts and issues revealed in the scoping study, but will also present a historical context, including the trends associated with these issues. Associated theoretical perspectives, which have been used within the literature to assist in description and analysis, will also be presented and examined.

