



R&D REPORT

NO. 82

**Consumer attitudes to
British made food:
Focus groups**

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Campden BRI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this research is to discover areas for expansion of the domestic market for British made food products. Consequently the first stage of this ongoing project was to run a series of focus group discussions. Five groups in total were conducted, three in Reading and two in Edinburgh. The aim of the focus groups was to investigate:

- What are seen as British made food products?
- For which products is being associated with Britain important?
- What are the elements of Britishness that are important for food products?
- Which dimension of country of origin has the greatest effect on perceptions of an authentic British food product?

The qualitative information gained from the groups was subsequently analysed using QSR NUD*IST, a software package designed to aid qualitative analysis. Using this type of software does not affect the qualitative interpretation, it simply alleviates the manual tasks involved in qualitative analysis, and may enable quicker, easier, and more in-depth searches of the data to be performed.

The five main themes emerging from the data were:

- How a British food product was identified
- Products for which a British origin was important
- Reasons for choosing a British product
- Barriers to purchasing a British food product
- Perceptions of authentic British food products

British origin was found to be more important for fresh products than processed products. In addition, a British origin was chosen for fresh products due to favourable perceptions of the intrinsic attributes of the product. Alternatively the Britishness of processed products related to the brand and style of the product. When considering the authenticity of a British food product, two main themes emerged; firstly the authenticity of a genuine British brand, and secondly the authenticity of a uniquely British product.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Concern over the magnitude of the UK's food trade gap has stimulated interest in potential mechanisms for improving the balance of trade. The main focus of this research is therefore to identify possibilities for British companies to capture a greater proportion of the home food market. The first stage of the project was to review the existing published literature on work concerning the country of origin of food products; this was then related to Britain and British food products.

This document reports results from research undertaken as part of a MAFF/CCFRA funded project on Attitudes Towards British Foods, as part of a PhD studentship. More specifically, focus group discussions were used to explore consumer perception of British foods, and how these differed according to the product category being considered. The results of this phase of the research will be used for further in-depth interviews.

1.2 The Use of Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative research method that uses guided group discussions to generate a rich understanding of participants' own opinions, beliefs and experiences (Morgan, 1998). Furthermore, they incorporate three of the fundamental strengths of qualitative research: exploration and discovery, context and depth, and interpretation (Morgan, 1998). In addition, they add to each of these areas the advantage of creating a process of exchanging, sharing, and comparing individuals' views, not only investigating context and depth but also individuals own interpretations of the topic.

Focus groups work best when the interest of the research team is equally interesting to the

participants of the group (Morgan, 1998). Food is a subject which is familiar and of some interest to most people. The focus group discussions should provide a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which people can share their views and opinions and hopefully prompt a relevant dialogue centered on the areas that are important to the research. Thus, the focus groups will not only aim to clarify issues already present in the literature, but will also be used to uncover areas of interest that are not adequately covered elsewhere, and allow these areas to be investigated in context.

1.3 Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis

The use of computers in the social sciences was traditionally for the analysis of quantitative data. Researchers are, however, increasingly using software for the analysis of qualitative data such as transcripts from focus groups and in-depth interviews, fieldnotes, and observational studies (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Consequently the role of the computer is no longer simply to compute numerical calculations, but to manipulate many different forms of information, from text to audio-visual material (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

The software available for qualitative analysis can be classed as either generic software which is possible to adapt for qualitative analysis, or dedicated software, designed specifically for the purpose (Fielding and Lee, 1998; Weitzman and Miles, 1995; Richards and Richards, 1995).

When considering the use of computer software in the analysis of qualitative data, it is first necessary to understand the function the computer has. Qualitative analysis software has the ability to do the same things as traditional manual methods, except more quickly and completely (Durkin, 1997). Indeed, software has the ability to improve the most tedious parts of qualitative research by removing the drudgery of copying, highlighting, cutting and pasting, etc. Consequently an analogy can be made with using a computer to calculate the statistics used in quantitative analysis as opposed to completing them long hand (Durkin, 1997). The computer, therefore, does not do the analysis; it should more accurately be

thought of as a powerful indexing and cross referencing tool (Morgan, 1998), that provides assistance only in the theoretical thinking. The analysis is, as always, the task of the researcher (Barry, 1998; Kelle, 1997).

1.3.1 Advantages of using the software

As mentioned earlier, one of the computer's functions in qualitative data analysis is data management (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Consequently, mechanising the manual procedures involved in the analysis can potentially offer benefits in terms of time, efficiency and more thorough analysis (Tesch, 1990).

Prior thought is required before each step of the analysis when using a software package, therefore making the analysis very systematic (Morgan, 1998). Indeed, there can sometimes be the perception that qualitative analysis involves the researcher simply stringing together 'juicy quotes' taken from the text, whereas the researcher using software is encouraged to clarify each stage of the analysis (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

When using software, a formalised record of the work done by the computer is made (Fielding and Lee, 1998). This facility is especially useful for those researchers working in teams (Conrad and Reinharz, 1984), or if progress and work is to be reviewed by others. In addition, this also makes checking the reliability of coding, between coders, easier to accomplish (Durkin, 1997), and for comparison studies to be undertaken (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Thus, for the current research, where the methods used to reach the end results may be viewed by numerous individuals possessing varying degrees of familiarity with the project, this is of great importance. A further benefit of recording the work done is that the software can be used to assist in developing and testing interview questions and focus group discussion guides, find patterns of action, and preserve actors' rhetoric and actions (Fielding and Lee, 1998). A computerised record of the codes applied to segments of the transcripts makes inconsistencies and unclear and redundant codes obvious (Durkin, 1997; Morgan, 1998). However, it is still the analyst's responsibility to apply the appropriate codes to the text, and it is the coding process that remains fundamental to the research (Coffey *et al.*, 1996).

By quickly and accurately retrieving coded data (Durkin, 1997), updating and modifying the coding system is made easier by the use of software (Morgan, 1998). For example, in a two-pass coding system where specific codes are expanded to provide a more detailed view of the emerging themes, it is possible to search the specific sections of text that have already been assigned that code, as opposed to searching the entire transcript.

The codes applied to each transcript are stored in a separate file to the original data, providing a number of advantages to the researcher. Firstly a clean copy of the data is always available, and secondly, each unit of the data can easily be coded in as many ways as necessary, meaning there is no need to prioritise codes. Finally, the context of the data is not disrupted through cutting and pasting a transcript, as the data is maintained in the original and in the coded sections of text (Durkin, 1997).

One of the most powerful advantages of the use of software is the speed and comprehensiveness of the search procedures (Morgan, 1998; Coffey *et al*, 1996). Single commands allow simple searches for every occurrence of a certain category (which would then allow finer coding as stated above), to more complex searches using the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT (Morgan, 1998; Durkin, 1997; Coffey *et al*, 1996). Thus, in purely mechanical terms, more comprehensive and complex code-and-retrieve tasks are possible using software than with traditional manual techniques (Coffey *et al*, 1996).

The results of a data search generally show the specific section data required with all overlapping codes, thus again maintaining the context of the data by showing how the current area of interest is also embedded within other issues (Durkin, 1997). Furthermore, as a consequence of the ease of data management the researcher is allowed to experiment with new types of search even though their success is not guaranteed. Therefore, software also facilitates a more creative analysis not readily possible when using traditional methods (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

It can also be argued that the use of software can enhance the credibility and acceptability of qualitative research (Fielding and Lee, 1998). This is achieved by increases in efficiencies in data management and the possibility of a more thorough analysis.

Ragnin and Becker (1989) contend that coincident with the development of desktop computers, the use of qualitative analysis software may help reduce the traditional gulf between quantitative and qualitative research. The computer encourages closeness to the data, and an intensive interactive style for both methods of analysis. In addition, a degree of methodological convergence may occur and quantitative researchers may find analysis of sub-populations easier. Moreover, qualitative researchers may have the ability to more thoroughly examine comparative contrast within their data (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Alternatively, this merging of methodologies can be seen as a problem, as this type of analysis leads to clashes between the methods and approaches to epistemology (the underlying qualitative and quantitative methodologies that may be considered to merge) and explanation favoured by qualitative researchers (Barry, 1998). However, Barry continues that this also represents a problem in more manual techniques, and recommends that thorough training and good supervision are the solution.

1.3.2 Disadvantages of using the software

In comparison to the benefits gained from using software in qualitative analysis the disadvantages are few (Fielding and Lee, 1998; Lee and Fielding, 1991). Those that exist can be grouped into four main categories: accessibility and availability; exaggeration of practical benefits; closeness to data; and unintended consequences (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

Accessibility and Availability

The argument is frequently used that the move to using software for qualitative analysis incurs a financial burden that is not present when using manual traditional methods. However, Fielding and Lee (1998) report that relative to the small and specialist market, the prices of the software remain competitive, especially with respect to other business-orientated packages. Nevertheless, problems may still arise relating to the transferability of both packages and data. With the development of desktop computers the difficulty of transferring the package has been greatly reduced. Furthermore, problems are also

prevalent when it is necessary for a researcher to transfer the paper copies used in manual qualitative analysis (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

Exaggeration of Possible Benefits

Many claims have been made about the number of advantages of computer assisted qualitative data analysis. Some programs, however, may be awkward to use, and have features that are just considered a hindrance (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Although these problems may occur, they are not insurmountable, but require self-teaching.

Closeness to Data

There is the common concern that the use of software discourages involvement with the data, and fosters the likelihood of losing the richest material. However, those researchers who have experience of using software realise that it is not possible to analyse data without reading and being familiar with it first (Barry, 1998). Nevertheless, according to Fielding and Lee (1998), some researchers will continue to have a preference for the tangible character of hard copies of data, and completing tasks by hand when using manual methods of analysis.

The software challenges researchers to be clear and to understand the assumptions that are being made about the data due to its systematic and rigorous structure. Furthermore, it must be realised that some researchers may conduct a superficial analysis, that lacks rigour and depth, whether they are using software or traditional manual methods (Barry, 1998).

Unintended Consequences

The final disadvantage of computer aided qualitative analysis proposed by Fielding and Lee (1998) is the possibility that it may lead to qualitative researchers studying large numbers of cases, mimicking survey based research. However, there is evidence that

researchers favour using software when handling large amounts or varied data, as opposed to large sample sizes (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Mason (1996) is of the opinion that using software may encourage the researcher to treat data in terms of more concrete variables, and thus performing more of a quantitative analysis. Although some packages allow categorisation of data, for example according to demographic characteristics, and also provide statistics connected to the occurrence of specific codes, Barry (1998) contends that these issues also presented a problem before computerisation. Consequently he continues that the solution to this problem is for the researcher to have a thorough understanding of and training in the use of computer aided qualitative analysis before commencing analysis.

1.3.3 The decision to use qualitative data analysis software

Although it is possible for the functions of the computer to be done mostly by hand, the use of a computer not only saves time but also ensures that the analysis performed is done in a thorough and consistent manner. Thus, coding and searching differs little between software applications and manual techniques; it is the speed and thoroughness when using software that is the overwhelming benefit of its use. The decision whether to use software in the analysis of qualitative data should be based upon how systematic the analysis is required to be (Morgan, 1998). The target audience, and purpose and depth of the analysis therefore are of prime consideration.

Consequently, as already explained, the use of software will benefit this project as it will allow the work to be reviewed by those external to the analysis. Furthermore, although only five groups are being analysed, as a piece of academic research the analysis is required to be systematic and rigorous. The QSR NUD*IST package is widely accepted in the academic world (Walsh and Lavalli, 1996), and has been used in studies similar to this research (see Kuznesof *et al.*, 1997). Therefore, it is the software package chosen for the analysis of this piece of qualitative research.

2. METHODS

2.1 Aims of the Focus Groups

The focus groups aim to address a number of issues arising from the literature and which relate to the overall objectives of the project. The particular questions addressed were:

- ◆ what are seen as British made food products?
- ◆ for which products is being associated with Britain important with regards to perceptions of overall quality?
- ◆ what are the elements/dimensions of Britishness when associated with food products?
- ◆ which dimension of country of origin has the greatest effect on perceptions of an authentic British food product?

2.1.1 What are seen as British made food products?

It was investigated how a British origin is conveyed. Of interest is whether consumers look at the country of origin information as declared on the product or if they use other product attributes. Consequently, the characteristics of the product that lead to the initial perception that a product is British will be revealed. Responses can be related to both the country of origin literature and new product data. This relates to the first aim of determining what are perceived to be British food products and how perceptions of these are formed. An indication will be provided of areas that it would be beneficial to investigate further and to possibly focus upon in the future. It can be assumed that for those products that are immediately seen as British, an actual British origin is important, thus leading on to the second aim.

2.1.2 For which products is being associated with Britain important?

It is important to investigate for which products, if any, consumers actively look to be of British origin. Again this will provide preliminary indications of the need to focus on specific products or product categories. The focus groups will also reveal those products for which a British origin inhibits purchase. Initial investigations examined for which products a British origin is important. This was then expanded to explore why individuals seek a British origin for these products, hence determining the attributes that make a British version of the product superior.

Initially, it is expected that product categories will be discussed, but that this will gradually be related to specific products. Furthermore, the information elicited will provide a basis for further research using individual laddering interviews, which will form the 'means end chain' stage of the research project. This stage will explore in more depth the rationale behind consumer decisions with respect to British food.

2.1.3 What are the elements/dimensions of Britishness that are important for food products?

The purpose was to reveal why a British origin promotes, or acts as a barrier, to the purchase of products. This was related to the country image of Britain: what dimensions of country image (human, natural or climatological) do consumers relate to product attributes creating overall favourable or unfavourable perceptions? An indication will be obtained of those attributes that should be promoted and those for which attention should be detracted. Any product specificity should be revealed through the dimensions of country image, and attribute importance.

2.1.4 Which dimension of country of origin has the greatest effect on perceptions of an authentic British food product?

The most significant determinant of product being perceived as British was investigated: country of origin; country of assembly; or country of design. This was then expanded to

establish whether products are considered to be authentic British food products. The issue of authenticity was then discussed with respect to what affects perceptions of authenticity, and how important the authenticity of a product is.

Therefore, from the information gained through the focus groups , the following should be known:

- ◆ what are seen as British made food products?
- ◆ which characteristics are used to classify a product as a British food product?
- ◆ for which products is a British origin most important?
- ◆ which specific characteristics make a British version of those products superior with regards to overall perceptions of quality?
- ◆ what are perceived to be authentic British foods?
- ◆ what are perceptions of authenticity based upon?

2.2 Focus Group Recruitment and Profile

Focus groups were conducted in more than one area. As the aim was to obtain an indication of British consumers' attitudes, groups were held in Reading and Edinburgh.

Guidelines were established for the recruitment of consumers. These guidelines consisted of demographic characteristics and a series of questions concerning issues related to food choice (Appendix 1). Consumers were recruited in Reading and Edinburgh city centres. Consumers were approached and asked the relevant questions from the recruitment questionnaires. If the responses were appropriate they were then invited to attend one of the focus groups.

A £20.00 cash gift was given to each individual attending a focus group in appreciation of their attendance. A maximum of ten consumers was invited to each group, allowing for the

likelihood of non-attendance. The actual number of participants in each group was seven or eight. The characteristics of each group is shown in Table 2.1.

On attending a group, participants were first welcomed and briefed about the procedure, asked to introduce themselves, and informed that an audio copy of the group would be made. Participants were then asked questions from the discussion guide (Appendix 2). A number of product prompts were on show which the participants were able to refer to when responding to questions, and that could be used by the moderator to stimulate further discussion. Although each section of the discussion guide was addressed, the sequence of questions varied depending on the natural discussion and momentum of each individual group. Groups were moderated by Angela Groves.

Table 2.1: Characteristics of the group discussions in terms of respondent profile.

| Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of participants | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Location | Reading | Reading | Reading | Edinburgh | Edinburgh |
| Gender | Female | Female | Male | Female | Female |
| Preference for British food | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Preference for foreign food | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Concerned about food issues | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| Not concerned about food issues | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| 20-25 | 3 | N/A | 1 | 3 | N/A |
| 26-30 | 2 | N/A | 3 | 4 | N/A |
| 31-35 | 2 | N/A | 3 | 1 | N/A |
| 36-45 | N/A | 5 | N/A | N/A | 3 |
| 46-55 | N/A | 3 | N/A | N/A | 4 |
| 56-65 | N/A | 0 | N/A/ | N/A | 1 |
| A/B | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| C1/2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| D/E | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Have children living with them | 1 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Do not have children living with them | 6 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 2 |

From the audio recordings a verbatim transcript was made. The transcripts were analysed using QSR NUD*IST, a soft-ware package designed for the analysis of qualitative data.

2.3 QSR NUD*IST: Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising

QSR NUD*IST is a software package designed to aid the handling of non-numerical and unstructured data, by assisting the process of coding data in an index system, searching text or searching patterns of coding, and theorising about the data (QSR NUD*IST, 1997). The package is designed around three main areas:

- ◆ Managing data documents
- ◆ Creating ideas and managing categories. By minimising clerical routine and allowing greater flexibility it allows the discovery and development of new ideas
- ◆ Asking questions and building and testing theories about the data, by searching for patterns, clarifying ideas, constructing and testing theories and allowing reports (QSR NUD*IST, 1997).

2.3.1 The NUD*IST project

There are two subsystems in an operating NUD*IST project: the document system and the index system. Within the document system, information is stored about every document, whether the document is imported or external to the project. Documents are linked to the index system as they are explored and coded (QSR NUD*IST, 1997). A major advantage of the document system is the ability to store, search and retrieve all or sections of a document (Guhan and Hannibal, 1998). The index system has been classed as the conceptual tool that can strengthen, enhance and bring order and clarity to the analysis process (Guhan and Hannibal, 1998). It consists of nodes, which are formed from the

themes and categories that emerge from the data, and each node contains reference to the sections of the documents that are coded to that node. The index system allows the analyst to organise and manage nodes, forming a system of nodes that can be used for inquiry, searching, and theory building throughout the analysis of the data.

2.3.2 Searching text in NUD*IST

Text and Index searches provide the search facility in NUD*IST. Text searches enable searches of a document to be conducted. These can be either simple string searches or more complex pattern searches. The index search is able to perform both BOOLEAN searches and also 'NUD*IST' searches. The 'NUD*IST' searches provide more useful and qualitative ways of asking questions about the data and can (QSR NUD*IST, 1997), be used to:

- ◆ **collect** material on a topic and allow it to be recoded;
- ◆ **build up** new categories by merging old ones;
- ◆ explore the **overlap** and **proximity** of ideas;
- ◆ discover **sequences** and **nesting** of categories
- ◆ tease apart and discover **patterns** in the data; and
- ◆ construct a matrix to explore the **relationship** between categories.

2.3.3 Monitoring progress

Qualitative analysis involves the transition from an abundance of unorganised data to the development of overall coordinated conclusions. However, it is necessary to methodically show how these conclusions emerged from the data. QSR NUD*IST has tools to record and monitor the stages of the development of these conclusions, for example:

- ◆ A record is automatically kept when a document or node is added;
- ◆ Document annotations can be added as thoughts or concepts occur, and QSR NUD*IST will automatically code them;
- ◆ Nodes can be defined and definitions and titles changed. Node definitions can be used to record changing ideas about the category;
- ◆ Memos can be written, edited, and stored in a document or at a node in the index system. QSR NUD*IST's editor will time-stamp the changes;
- ◆ Teams can locate and trail individual contributions by coding at a node for each team member their annotations and documents they code;
- ◆ Reports and documents, the index system, and nodes can be viewed, edited and saved at any time as records of these procedures and ideas.

Furthermore, the graphical user interface of QSR NUD*IST facilitates methods of data handling that are not possible through the traditional methods of qualitative analysis:

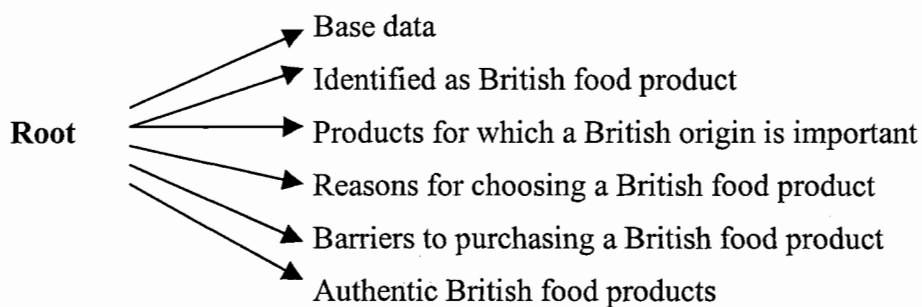
- ◆ move swiftly between processes (such as entering documents, coding, adding memos, searching, reporting);
- ◆ display the results of several processes simultaneously in different windows;
- ◆ edit, time stamp, save and print reports of results, without affecting the data in the project; and
- ◆ view, explore, and conduct operations by manipulating the visual tree display of the index system.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Using NUD*IST for the Analysis of the Data

The data gained from the focus groups has been analysed using QSR NUD*IST. Consequently an index system was constructed from the key issues raised by the data. In the hierarchical structure of the index system, the first level consists of the main areas that emerged from the data. Further levels were then formed depending upon the richness of the data, and the depth of analysis required.

Figure 3.1: The Index System for the project 'British made food products'.



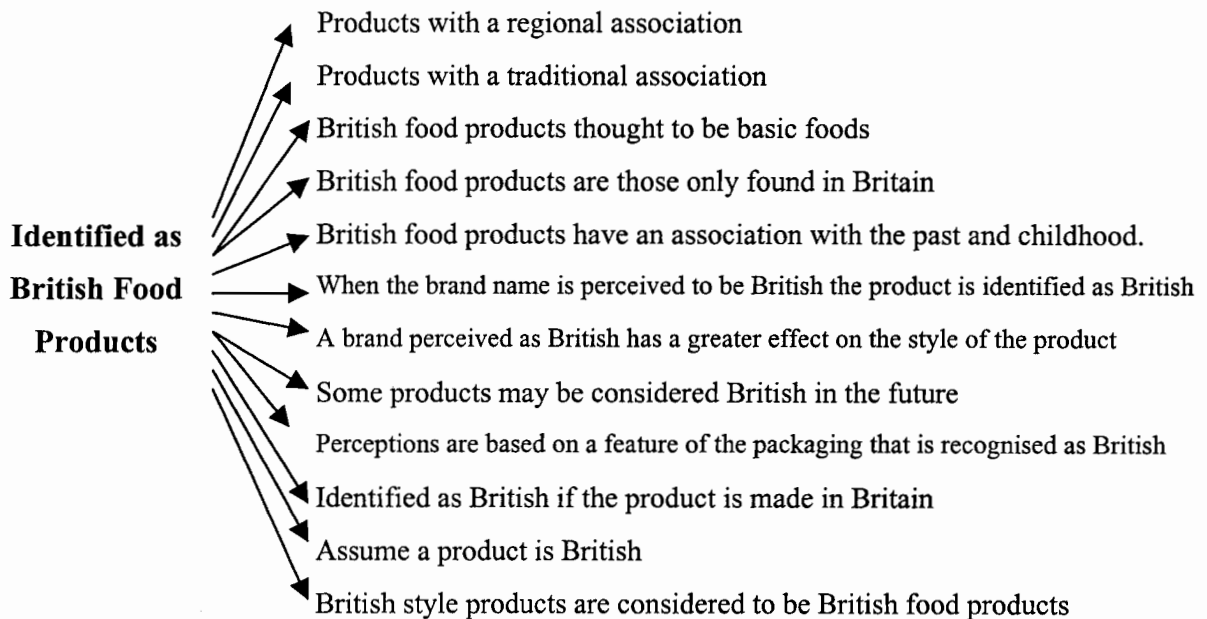
In this project, the information included under the first node was described as base data, and contains the characteristics of the groups. By making group characteristics part of the index tree it is possible to search the data, for example, to discover how the under 35 years of age groups respond to specific issues, or if there is any difference in the responses of the English and Scottish consumers.

Subsequent nodes represent the major themes that have emerged from the groups, and contain the relevant text from the focus group transcripts that discussed a specific issue. Therefore, when reporting the analysis results, the respective section of the index system was replicated, before being discussed alongside relevant examples extracted from the text.

3.2 Products Identified as British Food Products

Figure 3.2 shows the indexing system used to classify reasons for product being identified as British foods.

Figure 3.2: The indexing System for products identified as British foods.



3.2.1 Products with a regional association

The concept of region to identify a product as British was found to have two dimensions: dish and brand name. The term **dish** represented instances when a product was perceived to be a regional dish, or when a regional name was used as part of the name of the product, such as West Country soup, Lancaster Tarts, and Lancashire Hot Pot, for example.

Alternatively, the brand name dimension corresponded to the use of a regional name as the brand name of the product, an example of this being Taylor's of Harrogate Yorkshire Gold Tea Bags.

3.2.2 Products with a traditional association

Products perceived to be traditionally British were identified by participants as British products. This concept seemed to be used to describe foods the individual associated with the past. This was highlighted by: *"the Cumberland pie, steak and kidney pie; they are all well known sort of traditional"; "I think the recipe is going to originate from Britain as well, even it has slightly changed over the years."*

3.2.3 British food products thought to be basic foods

Participants appeared to be of the opinion that British food products were basic foods, and although examples of this could not always be given the view *"they're your basic foods"* was common. Although there was no clear distinction, two main themes existed in this area. Firstly, the British diet and food products in general were perceived as unexciting and basic. Secondly, British food products were basic, store-cupboard staples, for example *"I actually would think of it as fairly boring things", "it is basic cooking", and "I don't consider English foods to be particularly nice foods."*

3.2.4 British food products are those products only found in Britain

Products that were only found in this country, and not frequently found abroad were deemed to be British products. This idea covered both brand names only found in this country, and also the style of the product. The most frequently mentioned item was Marmite. Illustrative quotations were: *"if they were only found in England, in Britain"; "but you don't find it but it is very hard to find Branston pickle anywhere else or Marmite in the world"; and "that it is when you try and explain it to international friends they don't know what you mean by that [a specific product] so you think that that must be something that is fairly exclusively British."*

3.2.5 British food products have an association with the past and childhood

There was a strong tendency to class products that the individual associated with the past, especially childhood and their parents or the products that they had grown up with, as being British products. For the older participants this tended to be traditionally British products, whereas participants in the under thirty five groups were willing to consider traditionally foreign food products as British foods due to the way they have been established as part of the British diet. Again, both the brand and the style of the product were relevant to this issue. This can be demonstrated as follows: *"I think because you were brought up on them", "I would probably think of what I had in my childhood you know the foods I had at home, that is what would come to mind", and "people have grown up with it, it has been here for such a long time."*

3.2.6 When the brand name is perceived to be British the product is identified as British

A major determinant of whether a product was classed as a British product was if the brand was considered to be British. The brand did not need to have a British/regional name as previously described, just to be perceived to have a British origin was sufficient. The aspect of perceiving a brand to be British was important as the brand could actually be of foreign origin. This idea strongly related to idea of British products being products associated with the individual's past. To clarify, *"see this says Baxter's on it and Baxter's have always been British", "British institutions like Coleman's you know and Heinz you know for me Heinz is British and Kellogg's as well", and "Heinz that's British I think and especially the baked beans as well but anything Heinz I would think of as British"*. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the remainder of the report the term British brand will refer to these products, unless otherwise stated.

3.2.7 A brand perceived to be British has a greater effect than the style of the product

In continuation, it was evident that participants were of the view that the brand name had a greater influence on whether a product was thought to be British than the actual product itself. If the brand was well recognised and perceived to be British, the product was classed as British, even if the actual product was in a foreign style. This was represented by *“the Baxter’s soup although it is not a very British soup is it”*, when referring to a Baxter’s Mediterranean tomato soup, and *“I think I would take the name of the product rather than what the product actually is”*, or *“I would think of brands more than fish and chips”*.

3.2.8 Some products may be considered British foods in the future

Following on from brand being perceived as more British than the product, thought was also given to products being perceived as British in the future. Although a product may not currently be considered as British it may in time also become incorporated into the British diet and future generations will consider it to be a British product.

3.2.9 Perceptions are based upon a feature of the packaging that is recognised as British

Symbols participants associated with Britain that were used on the packaging of the product also led to the conclusion that the product was British, illustrated by *“I presume it is Welsh, it has a Welsh dragon on it”*.

3.2.10 Identified as British if the product is made in Britain

It was clear from the focus groups that few people referred to the actual country of origin information when deciding if a product was British. Participants used features such as the

brand or the style of the product which are instantly recognisable to make their judgements as well as looking at the actual made-in label.

3.2.11 Assume a product is British

Participants in the group also revealed that there were certain products that they just assumed were British. It was not clear on what these assumptions were based. There was a strong indication, however, that the effects of time and brand name had the greatest influence. To illustrate *“because they can be grown in Britain you presume they are British”*. This finding was concurrent with the findings of the Food Project (IGD, 1998), that consumers assume that products that can be produced in Britain are actually made in Britain.

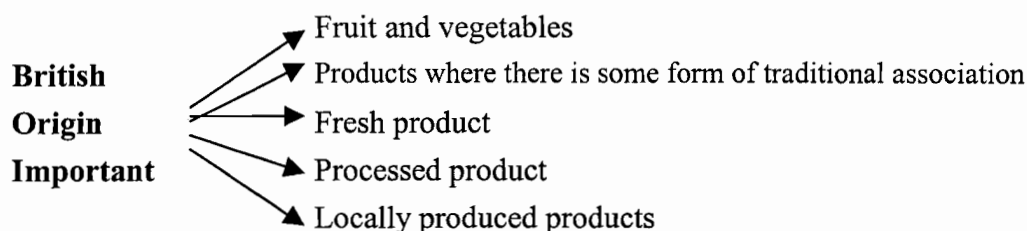
3.2.12 British style products are considered to be British food products

The culinary style of the product was also used to identify a British origin, this being more applicable to processed products than fresh products. This tended to relate to the recipe to which the product was made, or the way the product was served as part of a meal, for example *“stodge”, “puddings”, “Sunday roasts”, “Fish and chips” and “recipe dishes more than certain things”*.

3.3 Products for which a British Origin is Important

Figure 3.3 shows the indexing system used to help to categorise products for which a British origin is important.

Figure 3.3: Indexing system used to categorise product for which British origin was important.



3.3.1 Fruit and vegetables

When asked which products a British origin is important for, the most frequent response was fruit and vegetables: *“with vegetables I try to buy British stuff”*; and *“but fruit is the only thing that I really look at origin for and I would probably buy British yes”*. The only specific products that were consistently mentioned in this category were apples and strawberries. For instance, *“I think for things like apples, I always like the English apples”*, and *“something that I know is really good that is British, is fresh fruit strawberries”*.

3.3.2 Products where there is some form of traditional association

The existence of what the participants perceived to be a traditional relationship between Britain and the product led to a British origin being the desired option. This was mainly in the context of more processed foods, either where the brand was considered to be traditionally British or where the product was a traditional British style food, for example *“things like scones and pikelets what you think of as being traditional”*. Additionally, the traditional association was manifested through a regional association. Therefore, a British origin was also of relevance if there was some form of positive association between a region of Britain and the product. A product is thought to be of superior overall quality if it is produced in a specific region. Alternatively, if there is some form of traditional regional association which leads to more favourable perceptions of the product although there may not be any real differences, then a British version would be favoured.

This is emphasised by the following quotations: *“for me it would be something like saffron cake from Cornwall, because I know what it should taste like, and maybe clotted cream as well because it all comes down to where you associate a food to be from”*; *“but the oatcakes, they have some form of Scottish association”*; and *“you get your specific regional specialties for example Coleman’s mustard, because Norfolk and Coleman’s just go together”*.

3.3.3 Fresh Products

As previously discussed, fruit and vegetables was the one main product category for which a British origin was of major importance. However, participants also considered a British origin to be important for cheese, meat, and fish: *“I don’t [look for a British origin] for manufactured products, I occasionally look for things like vegetables and cheese”*; *“I think I make more of an effort when it is fresh, like fish and meat and vegetables and fruit”*; and more specifically *“I should think with beef, yes, because Scottish beef is far superior to anyone else’s”*.

3.3.4 Processed Products

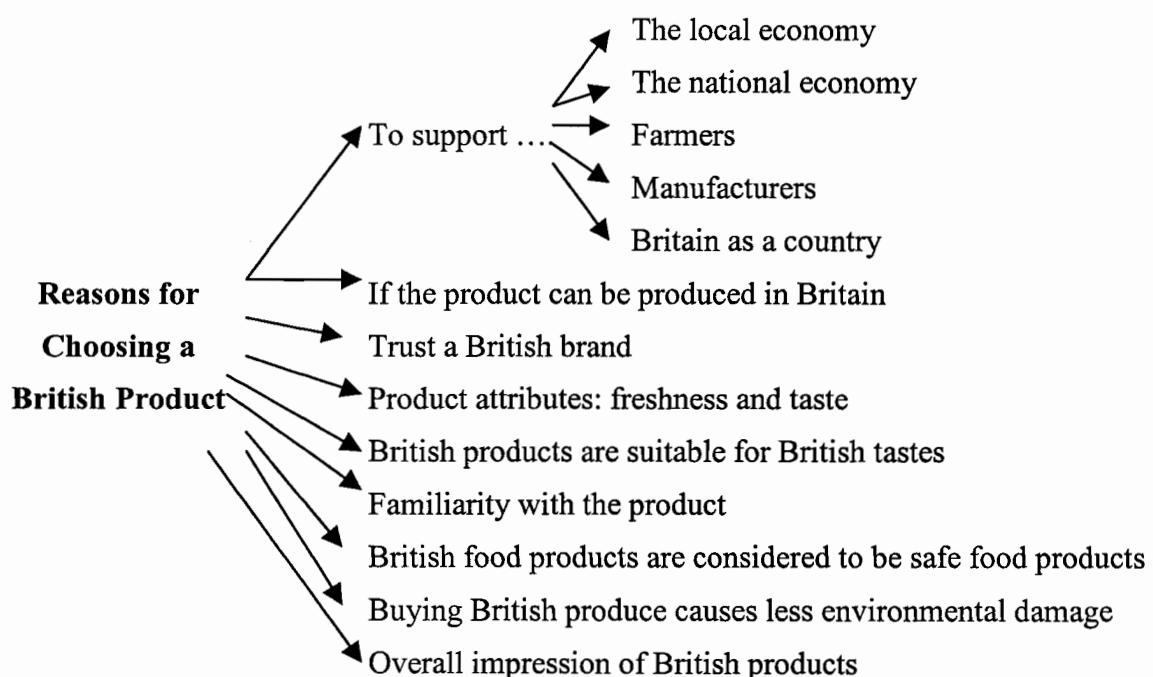
If a British origin was considered important for processed products it was for traditional British products: *“jam and marmalade and things, I tend to buy British marmalade”* and *“I think tea definitely, world wide people will buy British tea”*. Alternatively, a preference for a British product was in the context of branding, illustrated by *“I think a lot depends on the name doesn’t it, like Heinz soup, Heinz tomato soup and Baxter’s”*. As will be discussed in more detail later, a British brand was trusted to produce a product meeting the necessary standards, and that would be suitable for British tastes. This was thought to be relevant for both foreign and British style products. However, with further probing there was evidence that the appropriate foreign origin for foreign style products was preferred.

3.3.5 Locally produced products

There was a general consensus within the groups that there was a greater preference for a local origin, especially for fresh products, than for a more general British origin. This was emphasised by “...with your fruit and vegetables, if they were coming from there [local area], you would pick them up and potatoes and that” and “It would depend on what it was but it would be local rather than British”. Furthermore “..I think I am certainly swayed by something that I know is produced either where I was brought up or where I live now”, and concurrently, from a participant who grew up in Nottingham “if something had my place on, from Nottingham, then I would rather buy something like that, I would feel more proud buying something from Nottingham than say buying something from England or Scotland or Wales”. This reveals the importance of familiarity with a product.

3.4 Reasons for Choosing a British Food Product

Figure 3.4: Indexing system used to categorise reasons for choosing a British product.



3.4.1 To Support....

The Local Economy

Corresponding to the importance of a local origin for products was the idea that choosing local products would support the local economy, promoting investment in the area and providing employment for local people. This being highlighted by *“I suppose it keeps people in a job as well as all the ancillary jobs connected to it for all the local people”*, and *“if there was a stall saying Reading produce then fair enough I would [buy local produce]”*.

The National Economy

The same theme was also important more generally, where a consequence of purchasing a British food product was the support of the national British economy, for example *“I think you like to feel that you are supporting the British economy by buying British”*.

Farmers

Participants easily related buying British products to supporting British farmers. Although this could be influenced by the current agricultural situation, the impression was given that as farming and agriculture were visible to the individual they felt more aware and closer to those they felt they were supporting.

Manufacturers

Although participants did consider supporting manufacturers it was more in the context of providing employment, unless the company was a specific local manufacturer and they actually wanted to see the business develop.

Britain as a Country

In addition, it was also thought important to support Britain as a country. This did, however, seem to be a general term that covered not only the economy and manufacturers, but also incorporated the issues of national pride and national image. To demonstrate *“I suppose because they are Scottish [general products] it is a bonus, but it is good to see your own products”*, *“but I think it is nice to feel that you have supported your country”*, and finally *“it appeals to your patriotic instincts”*.

3.4.2 If the product can be produced in Britain

A strong preference was shown for a British origin for products that had either been traditionally produced in Britain, or for which Britain has the ability to produce to the necessary standards. This seemed to be important for economic reasons, but was of greater relevance for the production of fresh produce, such as fruit and vegetables. Typical quotations were: *"I think it is the principle that there are so many apples here and it just seems ridiculous to be bringing them in"; "it is like tomatoes as well, isn't it; you get all these Dutch tomatoes when you know we can grow tomatoes really well";* and for an alternative product category *"cheddar, though you can get foreign cheddar I would always but British first"*.

3.4.3 Trust a British brand

The general opinion was held that if a British brand was trusted it would be the favoured purchase option, therefore reinforcing the likelihood of purchasing a British product. It was debatable if this would be true as although a brand may be perceived to be British it may not necessarily be the reality. Furthermore, it was not clear whether the brand was trusted because it was British, or because of the brand name itself. Nevertheless, the participants in the groups considered trusting a British brand a reason to choose a British product and therefore it is an issue that should be included.

3.4.4 Product attributes: freshness and taste

Relating to the physical characteristics of the product, a British product was thought to be superior to its imported alternatives as it would be fresher as a consequence of less travel. This was more important for fresh products where possible deterioration is greater, illustrated by a stated preference for *"our produce rather than imported stuff that is probably not as fresh"*. Sensory characteristics were also discussed by participants. The groups revealed a tendency for the taste of British products also to be considered superior. This was relevant for both fresh and processed products: *"I've tried foreign strawberries and they just don't taste of anything"*, *"if you knew that your local greengrocer gets his*

potatoes from the local farmer then I would just assume they were going to taste better”, and simply “...but the British ones [strawberries] always seem to taste better”.

3.4.5 British products are suitable for British tastes

Concurrent with idea of the sensory characteristics of fresh British produce being superior, processed British products were also thought to be superior as they would be suitable for British tastes. This applied to versions of traditionally foreign foods that were made by a British manufacturer, alongside traditionally British foods. In addition, there was a connection between this concept and two further reasons for choosing a British product that also emerged: familiarity with the product, and trusting a British brand. Quotations highlighting this were: *“I assume things are British and that we know we are going to like the taste of them whether we know they are good for us or not, I think we know we are going to like the taste of them”, “but a quality product for British tastes as well, so if you know Baxter’s made a curry sauce...you know it would be to British tastes”, and therefore “...you know you are going to get a certain type of product, you are going to get a certain taste and it is a taste that is tapered to British palettes that is okay and you know what you are going to get”.*

3.4.6 Familiarity with the product

Unsurprisingly, familiarity with a product acted as an incentive for purchase. Although pertinent to general purchase choice, of current relevance is the motivation to purchase a British product due to the familiarity felt towards both British products and brands. The more familiar the individual is with the product, regional association, producer, brand etc., the stronger is the impulse to buy British products. For example, there was a strong preference for Scottish shortbread by the participants in the Scottish groups. To illustrate: *“it is because you know I suppose more than anything it is stuff that you are used to isn’t it”, and “...from you know influence from your parents you know seeing what products they buy and them saying we have bought British this or whatever and not buying French*

stuff and then you kind of think that British is like a good standard of whatever that food is so you'll buy that I think when you are out shopping yourself."

3.4.7 British food products are considered to be safe food products

Participants in the groups were of the overall opinion that British food products were safe food products. Some reasons for this assessment were suggested: standards imposed by retailers, manufacturers, or the government; or as the consequence of previous food safety scares, demonstrated by *"they are very stringent all the supermarkets are"*, and *"I think because of the BSE thing you know there are stricter regulations so you are probably safer to go with British"*.

3.4.8 Buying British produce causes less environmental damage

It was indicated that local and British food was preferred as less transportation was involved. This resulted in less environmental pollution, for instance *"it just makes me think the cost to the environment shipping them [apples] all the way from New Zealand"*, and *"I just think it is more sensible to grow things in your own country than to fly them half way round the world"*. Furthermore, this is also related to other reasons for purchasing a British product, such as supporting the local economy, the actual overall intrinsic quality of the product, and especially choosing a British origin for products that Britain can adequately produce.

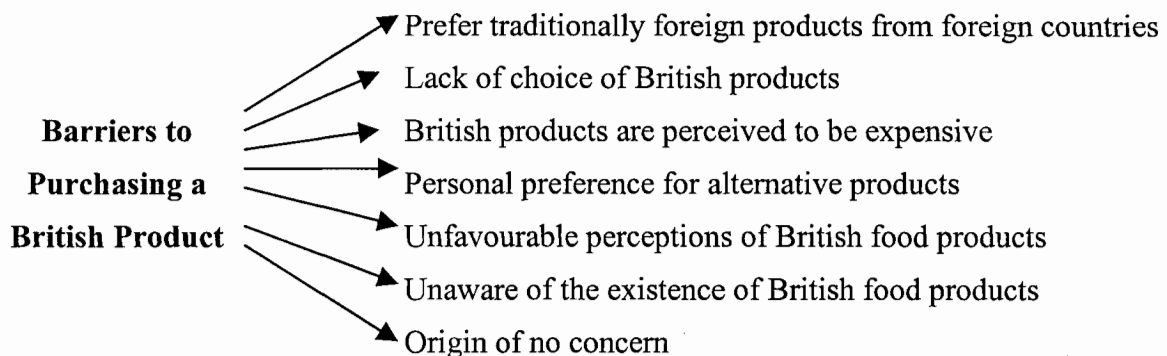
3.4.9 Overall impression of British products

Evident from the groups was the idea that it was difficult to generalise about the overall quality of British made food products. There was a strong divide between fresh and processed products, and for processed products further variation between different companies and brands. In addition, there was also the distinction made between what were seen as everyday and luxury products. Overall, participants were able to name at least one

characteristic of British products that they found preferable to imported products. Participants in the Edinburgh groups, however, had a higher opinion of Scottish products than British products in general, whilst participants in the male group held the least favourable opinions of British made food products.

3.5 Barriers to Purchasing a British Product

Figure 3.5: Indexing system used to categorise barriers to purchasing a British product.



3.5.1 Prefer traditionally foreign products to come from foreign countries

If a product is traditionally associated and produced in a foreign country then a British version of that product would be looked on unfavourably. The imported product would therefore be the preferred purchase choice. If a product were to be produced in this country with what were thought to be 'unnatural' methods, then the product would be avoided. These ideas are represented by the following quotations: *"I'm quite happy for my foreign fruit to come from foreign countries"*; *"I would just be suspicious of something that the recipe was from somewhere else but it was made here"*; and *"if they started growing bananas in Britain I'm not convinced I would be buying them; I just think that that would be absolutely crazy, you know they would have to have a special environment created for growing bananas and that just wouldn't be on"*.

3.5.2 Lack of choice of British products

A general theme emerged revealing that in some cases there was simply a lack of suitable British alternatives, or what were considered suitable British alternatives to foreign products. To clarify, participants expressed that they *“find that that there are very few English apples on the market whereas we used to grow a whole variety, a whole selection, but there is very little choice now”*, specifically *“I was thinking that if you are a vegetarian then I mean I don’t often buy traditional British stuff because it is hopeless”*, and with respect to buying local produce *“I think if the choice was there then yes but it is not at the moment”*.

3.5.3 British products are perceived to be expensive

The perception that British products were expensive inhibited their purchase. Two main issues were revealed regarding how participants made this judgement. Firstly, British products were perceived to be more expensive than imported alternatives, and secondly British and local products, especially, should be cheaper than they are at present. To demonstrate, *“isn’t a lot of it down to price though; I mean for instance New Zealand lamb is a lot cheaper than English lamb for some strange reason”*. Solutions suggested were *“to make things better I think for British produce; the price isn’t reflected in it, you get a lot of countries the local produce is a lot cheaper than imported produce, but unfortunately I think in this country it isn’t often reflected, the home grown produce is often more expensive than the overseas produce”*.

3.5.4 Personal preference for alternative products

Personal preference and taste is of major importance in food choice. Consequently, participants showed a disposition to choose foreign products, regardless of otherwise patriotic instincts, if that was the specific product that the individual simply preferred to eat.

3.5.5 Unfavourable perceptions of British food products

A number of factors led to an overall view of British products being unfavourable, and these were connected to a lack of traditional or regional association. British food products had a dull or basic image, products were thought to be of poor quality and there was a lack of faith in the standards of production. These views were highlighted as follows: *“I don’t know perhaps it sounds really prejudiced but I don’t tend to associate Wales with very good produce”*; and with regards to a paw paw jam made in Wales *“well I think of jam itself as being traditionally English, it seems a bit of an anomaly to have something foreign in jam; paw paw jam”*. In general, *“I don’t usually look for England I usually look for another country because it is more glamorous you know in a fun kind of way”*; *“you don’t always associate a British product with being a quality product”*; and *“I’ve heard about friends working in food factories as well, telling me horror stories about what goes on that I don’t trust them anymore; you just hope you heat everything up enough to kill whatever is in there”*.

3.5.6 Unaware of the existence of a British product

Relating to familiarity, it was revealed that participants were unaware of the existence of a British version of a specific product. As a consequence, they therefore chose the product or brand that they had a greater familiarity with.

3.5.7 Origin of a product is of no concern

Concurrent with the Food Project (IGD, 1998) the origin of food products was not of great concern to many consumers. Although it was apparent that participants knew which products to avoid due to an unfavourable origin (usually based on political reasons), in general, other product attributes had a greater affect on purchase choice. For example: *“for me I don’t think it [country of origin] is a big issue if I’m going to be honest”*; and *“although always in a supermarket they always say country of origin it doesn’t really*

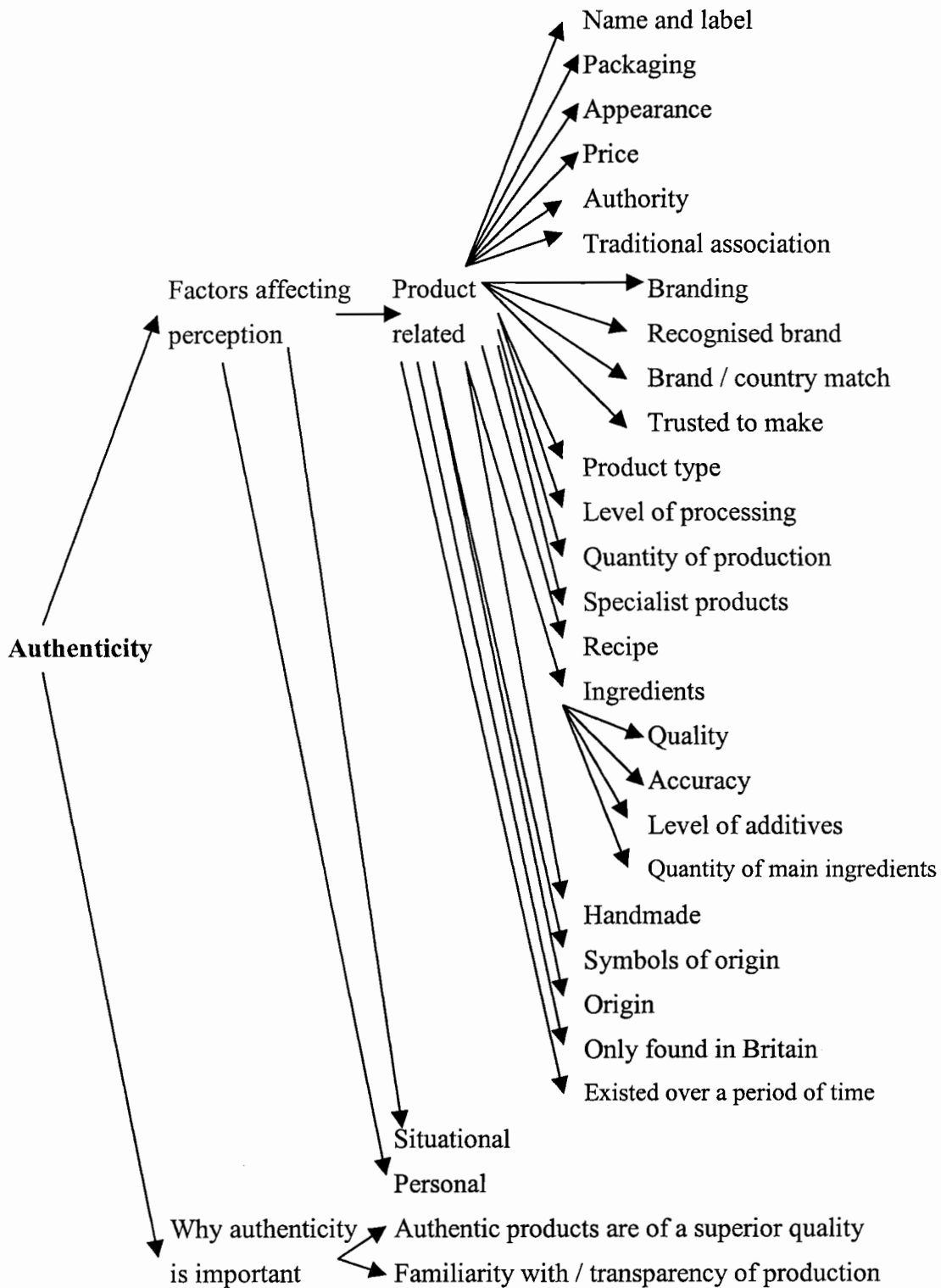
bother me where they [fruit and vegetables] come from". The following view was held by a number of participants "if it is the same price and the same quality it doesn't matter where it comes from" and "does it really matter where it comes from if it tastes the same."

3.6 Authentic British Food Products

The model proposed by Kuznesof *et al.* (1997) of factors affecting perceptions of authenticity was used as a guide for the analysis of this area. The three influences identified were product, situational, and personal, and these were found in this analysis, although the dimensions of each were not identical with those previously found (Kuznesof *et al.*, 1997). However, in the groups themselves a greater emphasis was placed on product related influences that inevitably came through in the analysis. Furthermore, also emerging from the data were reasons why the authenticity of a product was important.

Figure 3.6 shows the indexing system used to categorise factors associated with authentic British food products.

Figure 3.6: Indexing system used to categorise factors associated with authentic British food products.



3.6.1 Factors affecting perceptions of the authenticity of a product

Product Related Factors

Name and label

Although proposed as product related factors by Kuznesof *et al.* (1997), the use of name and label as determinants of perceptions of authenticity was weak, and was usually incorporated into the appearance, packaging, and product description areas.

Packaging

Participants considered the packaging to have an effect on the authenticity of the product. This could either be the general style of the packaging, for instance *“just the packaging looks handmade”* if more traditional, or what appeared to be more traditional methods of packaging were used, or if the packaging of the product had never undergone any major changes, for example *“the style of the packaging hasn’t changed for as long as I can remember”*; this was particularly relevant for branded products: *“authentically British would be....I would look at it and say that it is definitely a British thing and that would be the brand and the wrapping”* indicating that the product was perceived to be more authentic.

Appearance

It was evident that the effect of appearance on the perceptions of authenticity was a very subjective concept. Participants seemed to make judgements about authenticity on the basis of whether the product ‘looked’ authentic. To illustrate *“...that she was making that in her kitchen or something, you would think that just from the way it is”*, and when asked what makes a product appear more authentic one response was *“a bit more rustic looking”*.

Price

Perceptions of authenticity, as will be shown later, were related to the perceptions of overall quality of the product. Consequently, the general opinion was held by the participants that the more expensive the product was then the higher the quality, and correspondingly, the more authentic it was perceived to be. This further related to a

number of the other dimensions that were found to affect authenticity, such as paying for the extra effort required to make the product by hand, and with the correct ingredients etc. To demonstrate: *"I think the more expensive something is, the more authentic you think it is going to be really"*.

Authority

There was disagreement over whether any individual or organisation actually had the authority to say that a product was authentic, or whether individuals simply had to use their own judgement based on his or her existing knowledge and past experience. For example: *"no, it's just your judgement"* being used to determine the authenticity of a product. Of further relevance was what the individual considered the term authenticity to mean and the criteria the individual used to assess it, and the actual product in question. Overall, it seemed that small specialist retailers and brands possessed the ability to state whether a product was authentic, clarified by *"yes, if it was a little shop I think you would"* and *"if it is a really big brand that you know, that has been around for a long time, you probably trust them more if they said it, than I suppose a new company"*. However, the most preferred source of authority was a knowledgeable, but independent organisation, for example *"...like the Soil Association that does the organic, well at least you think you can trust them"* and *"you don't want someone who could benefit from them, you don't want a retailer or a manufacturer necessarily, some sort of independent governing body like MAFF or whatever"*. Furthermore, where authenticity represented the accuracy of the country of origin, authority was given to retailer, although this may be specific to the actual product being discussed: *"Tesco does with their meat, they tell you where the source is, where it is from"*.

Traditional association

The existence of some form of traditional association is not only favourable for purchase choice in the context of hybrid products, but also leads to perceptions that the product is more authentic. To highlight: *"Scottish marmalade or something like that, yes you do always think of that as being made in Scotland and being authentic"*. When asked if a paw paw jam made in Wales was authentic a negative reaction was common: *"I don't think that rings true at all that jam no I don't like that idea"*.

Branding

It is possible that a second form of authenticity is applied to branded products, that is the brand being the original producer of the product. However, this still applies to the form of authenticity of relevance to this study, that is being a genuine British food product, and can be included as a product related factor affecting perceptions of authenticity. To clarify: *“I suppose it is coming from you have got your traditional authentic stuff, which is the recipe and cakes and stuff which are generally more authentic if they are fresh you know, but then you have got the brand stuff, with all the advertising where something has been made authentic, when you have been told that this is British, so I think there are kind of two aspects of it”* .

Three distinct areas were identified within the area of branding:

1. **Recognised brand.** A familiar, easily recognised, and well established brand was considered to be an authentic British product. Also covered in this area was the tendency to class the original branded version of a product as authentic, as opposed to other subsequent branded or own label imitations.
2. **Brand and country match.** If the brand was perceived to have the same origin as the traditional style of the product then it was generally considered by the participants that the product would be authentic, for example a Baxter’s Scotch broth.
3. **Trusted to make.** If the brand was trusted by the individual then it was also trusted to make an authentic version of a product. Furthermore, if a trusted brand was thought to have the authority to decide what the authentic version of a specific product was.

Although three separate dimensions of the branding issue in the context of authenticity have been identified, it should be stressed that these issues are strongly related, and affect each other.

Product type

It was possible for the participants to apply the concept of authenticity to both fresh produce and processed products. For fresh produce, Scottish salmon or English Cox apples were thought to be authentic, although it was acknowledged that this was almost entirely based on familiarity with the specific product. For processed products, the issue became more complex, with a number of factors affecting perceptions of authenticity, such as the issue of branding as discussed above as well as characteristics of the method of production.

Level of processing

The less processed a product is, or appears to be, the more authentic it is judged to be, for example: *“I suppose authenticity would be something that was as close to the home cooked version as possible”*.

Quantity of production

In addition, if the product looks less mass-produced it was also considered to be more authentic, such as: *“I would go for something that looked quite fresh, from a small bakery or something”*.

Specialist products

Craft and specialist products were generally thought to be more authentic. However, it is possible to relate this to other factors such as the quantity of production, level of processing, and whether a product is handmade. In general, if more effort is required to produce a product then individuals will more readily accept it as being authentic.

Recipe

If the product was made to the original, or a traditional recipe, for example *“an original recipe passed down through generations”*, then this resulted in more favourable opinions of the authenticity of the product. Furthermore, if the recipe was considered to be authentic, this appeared to be more important than the actual place where the product was made. However, this was only applicable to products with a regional association, for instance *“I guess the recipe, I mean the Dundee cake, I would expect it to be an authentic recipe for Dundee cake, not just some kind of fruit cake that is thrown together”*.

Furthermore, with attention to the issue of vegetarianism, a vegetarian Lancashire hot pot

was not considered to be authentic. To illustrate “*no it wouldn't taste the same it wouldn't be authentic at all, it wouldn't be the way they first made it*”. In addition, there was a strong connection between the influence of the recipe and of the ingredients and perceptions of the authenticity of a product.

Ingredients

Relating to the recipe, the effect of the actual product ingredients on perceptions of authenticity was also discussed by the participants.

1. ***Quality of ingredients.*** Participants expected authentic products to contain superior quality ingredients. The quality of the ingredients was therefore used to form perceptions of the level of authenticity; to clarify: “*you would expect it to be more whole fruit and less mushed up stuff*”.
2. ***Accuracy of ingredients.*** Strongly related to the recipe was the accuracy of ingredients, referring to the need for a product to have the correct proportions of the necessary ingredients for the end product to be authentic. For example, when referring to Cornish pasties “*it is everything, the quantity of maybe onions that you use and the quantity of the meat and how you make your pastry*”. This is also related to the view some participants had that the ingredients should, if possible, come from their original origin.
3. ***Level of additives.*** As stated above, participants tended to believe that the closer to the home cooked version then the more authentic a product would be. Consequently if a product contained fewer additives, and appeared to be more natural, then it was perceived to be more authentic, demonstrated by an authentic product being described as one with “*maybe not as many of these, as you say, additives*”. To highlight the distinction between the two different types of authenticity described earlier, the following view was common: “*I just wouldn't expect most packaged foods to be that authentic because they have got so many preservatives and things in*”.

4. ***Quantity of main ingredient.*** It was also evident that if the product contained a higher proportion of the main ingredient then perceptions of the main ingredient would be greater, for example, jams with a higher fruit content.

Handmade

Concurrent with some of the above issues, if the product was handmade or appeared to the participants to be handmade, then perceptions of authenticity would be stronger.

Symbols of origin

Authenticity was related to the origin of a product; if the product packaging conveyed symbols of Britain then the assumption was made that it must be an authentic British product, for example *“I think particularly Scottish with tartan on”*.

Origin

The view was held by some of the participants that both the place of production and the origin of the ingredients had influence on the authenticity of the product. *“I mean I perceive a product that was made at its origin was more likely to be made to an authentic recipe than one that was made somewhere else....I would just be suspicious of something that the recipe was from somewhere else but it was made here”* can be used as an example.

Only found in Britain

Again referring to the relationship between authenticity and origin, if the product was only found in this country, not available overseas, or instantly recognisable as being British if it was seen in another country, it was considered to be an authentic British product. This was applicable to all product categories, for example, the brand name, the style/recipe of the product, or traditional British fruit and vegetables.

Existed over a period of time

As with identifying a product as British, if the participants were able to relate a product to the past in some way then perceptions of authenticity were greater. For example, *“the history of a brand as well, I can pick out the Marmite”*, *“it has always looked like that,”* and *“the original recipe handed down through generations”*.

Situational factors affecting perceptions of authenticity

Three factors were incorporated into the area of situational influence in the study by Kuznesof *et al.* (1997): catering establishment, retail outlet, and being a tourist or a visitor. Of the three, the effect of the retail outlet was of greater prominence in this study. In general, more specialist shops were thought to stock more authentic products. This was applicable to fresh products where authenticity represented origin, for products such as cheese and bakery goods where the recipe or method of production was of relevance to the authenticity of a product, and also for branded products where the authenticity was concurrent with the originality of the brand. The indication was given that possible reasons for this were that smaller and more specialist retailers were trusted as it was thought that they had too much to lose if they deceived their customers. Secondly, and concurrent with the product related factors, more effort and time was perceived to be devoted to the customer, and the products, therefore leading to more favourable perceptions of authenticity.

Personal factors affecting perceptions of authenticity

Kuznesof *et al.* (1997) proposed that knowledge and experience of a product affected perceptions of authenticity. These factors also emerged from the data gained in this project, alongside familiarity with a product, and expectations of what an authentic product should be. Participants were of the opinion that the more familiar you are with a product, the more you would want it to be authentic and stricter you would be when assessing a product's authenticity. However, this was dependent upon the individual, for example: *"I think it depends on how much of a food connoisseur you are"* and *"I personally wouldn't know what was meant to be in a hot pot anyway"*.

3.6.2 Why authenticity is important

Authentic products are of a superior quality

Products that are perceived to be authentic, whether they are processed or fresh, were perceived to be of a superior quality. It was evident that this is due to a number of factors, including those that affect perceptions of authenticity, such as method of production and level of additives. Also emerging from the data is the idea that authentic products are fresher, and consequently are viewed as being of a higher quality.

Familiarity with production/transparency of production

From the product related factors affecting perceptions of authenticity, it was apparent that a number of the factors related to production methods, revealing a preference for production methods that the individual has a greater understanding of and familiarity with. Consequently, authenticity seemed to be important to consumers as it represented a production process (and therefore end product) that they could trust, either through familiarity or transparency.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Overall Conclusions

The findings from the data offer support for current 'buy British' campaigns that seem to have a more agricultural emphasis, and therefore cover fresh products, such as meat and fruit and vegetables. The results demonstrated that a British origin is indeed important for fresh products, whereas for processed products other factors have a greater effect on purchase decision.

When considering fresh produce, alongside supporting the economy, the major reasons that a British origin was preferable were related to actual product attributes, such as taste, freshness, and overall quality. For processed products, the characteristics that relate to Britishness are mostly connected to the effects of brand name and also the style of cuisine the product incorporates. It is these factors that consumers use as reasons why a British origin is favourable for processed products.

The second main area of investigation was authenticity. Authenticity is related to food products in a number of ways, for example the use of non-durum wheat in place of durum wheat in pasta production. Of importance in this study is whether a product is perceived to be authentically British. From the results it was possible to conclude that consumers class a product as authentically British in two ways. Firstly, authenticity is related to the brand name and whether a specific brand is perceived as genuinely British. The second form of authenticity is determined by the style of the food product being uniquely British, therefore relating more to the recipe on which the product is based.

When referring back to the six questions posed at the start of the qualitative research, it can be seen that the index system produced by the analysis with NUD*IST provided a clear and precise response. Consequently, this can be seen as an advantage of using NUD*IST as it is easy to view and work with the specific section of the analysis that is relevant to a certain issue.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

It was possible that the group discussions were limited to the variety of products that were used as prompts. This was not evident, however, as fruit and vegetables and other fresh products not displayed as prompts were frequently and easily discussed by participants in all the groups. Nevertheless, it is possible this may have been a factor affecting the emphasis placed upon the importance of branding, and the effect brand name has on perceptions of both a British origin and authenticity.

Although regional differences are not specifically being investigated, if it had been possible to run groups in other regions of Britain the results obtained would have provided a greater impression of British consumers' attitudes to British made food products. A further related issue is that of area in which the groups were held, as it possible that different views may be held between consumers living in urban and rural areas. It is possible that this may affect the type of retail outlet used and therefore the type and range of products available, and also the relationship between retailer and consumer. Also relevant may be the importance to the individual of either agriculture, or more industrial food processing factories, depending on whether they or their family had the opportunity of employment in this sector. With reference to the importance of traditional and regional products, it is possible that in more rural areas, where there may be a greater knowledge of the products traditionally produced in that region, these factors have a greater influence on perceptions of a British origin, than in more urban areas.

4.3 Areas of Future Work

The issues raised in connection with why a British origin or authenticity of a product was important appeared to be discussed in a general way. Therefore, future plans to conduct a series of laddering interviews and a mean-end chain analysis to uncover the internal value the individual fulfils with the purchase of either a British or an authentic product, is supported.

As discussed above, a limitation of the study was the inability to obtain a substantial regional, and urban/rural comparison. It is the intention to use a quantitative survey as the third piece of data collection in this project. Although this will not be able to uncover the richness of information that was possible in the focus groups, it will have the benefit of incorporating a large sample and therefore allowing any geographic variations to be uncovered.

Finally, it was evident from the groups that consumers are unable to generalise about the overall quality of British made food products. Although mainly due to variations between product categories, this view was also affected by the individual retail outlet, faith in the standards to which a specific product is produced etc. Therefore if the overall aim of the research is to assess consumer attitudes to British food products, it is important that future work incorporates both a fresh and a processed product. Furthermore, both products should be familiar to consumers, have a similar historical/traditional significance, and the significance of the relationship between the processed product and a brand name should also be comparable to the association between the fresh product and Britain.

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APPENDIX 1: RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Good morning / afternoon / evening

I am carrying out a survey on behalf of the University of Reading.
Have you got time to answer a few questions?

1. Do you, or any of your close friends or relatives work in any of the industries shown
On the card?

Marketing
Marketing Research
Journalism
Advertising
Media
Food Industry (manufacture or sales)

2. Are you currently studying at a university or college?

Yes
No

3. Approximately what proportion of your households weekly shopping do you do,
either on your own or with your partner?

All
More than half
About half
Less than half
None

4. I am going to read out a series of statements that people have made concerning food choice, and I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with them by using the scale on the card

| | Strongly agree 1 | Agree 2 | Neither agree or disagree 3 | Disagree 4 | Strongly Disagree 5 |
|--|---------------------|------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| I buy mostly British style foods. | | | | | |
| I buy mostly foreign style foods. | | | | | |
| When I am on holiday I like to try the local foods. | | | | | |
| I prefer to products that have been produced in the region with which they are associated. | | | | | |
| I usually buy well known brands. | | | | | |
| I usually buy own labels. | | | | | |
| I use specialist stores for particular products. | | | | | |
| I purchase all the household food in one shop. | | | | | |
| I frequently look to see where the food I buy was produced. | | | | | |
| I am concerned about welfare/ethical issues connected with a product. | | | | | |
| I enjoy trying new foods that I have never eaten before. | | | | | |
| When eating out I usually choose traditional British dishes. | | | | | |
| When eating out I usually choose dishes traditionally made in other countries. | | | | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Minimum of 3 out of 4 - Preference for British food. |
| | Minimum of 3 out of 4 - Preference for foreign food. |
| | Minimum of 7 out of 9 - Concerned about food issues. |
| | Minimum of 7 out of 9 - Not concerned about food issues. |

To ensure that we have a good representation of people I need to ask a few more questions.

6. Which of these corresponds to your age group?

20-25
26-30
31-35
36-45
46-55
56-65
65+

7. Which of these categories refers to your marital status?

Single
Married / Cohabiting
Separated / Divorced
Widowed

8. Could you tell me if you have any children who are under the age of 16 and live with you full time?

Yes
No

9. What is the occupation of the chief wage earner?

10. Is this full or part-time?

Full-time (over 30 hours a week)
Part-time (8-30 hours a week)
Not working

Fill in the social grade of the respondent.
Grade by chief wage earner

A/B
C1/2
D/E

11. Have you attended a group discussion on food issues within the last 12 months?

Yes
No

THANK AND CLOSE THE INTERVIEW
INVITE TO GROUP DISCUSSION

“We are interested in finding out consumer views about various issues concerning food choice. One of the ways we do this is to invite consumers such as yourself to a groups discussion.

A group discussion is an informal evening where people such as yourself are asked their opinions about a series of issues. Over the next couple of weeks we are conducting a series of group discussions to investigate consumer attitudes towards a series of food choice issues and would be interested in your views.

The group discussion will last for two hours. You will receive a gift of £20.00 as a token of our appreciation for your participation.

Unfortunately children are not able to accompany you, so you will need to make alternative arrangements for them.”

Ascertain if respondent is willing and able to attend.

Respondent Details

NAME

ADDRESS

DAY TIME TELEPHONE NUMBER

HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER

I consent to taking part in a group discussion on food choice. The interviewer has informed me that the groups will be recorded for the purpose of analysis and interpretation, and that this material will only be accessed by personnel involved in the project.

I understand that I may withdraw from the group at any time.

The interviewer was unknown to me before the start of the interview.

Signature of respondent:

Date:

Recruitment Criteria for Group 1

| Description | Quota | Achieved |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Women | 10 | |
| Preference for British food | 6 | |
| Preference for foreign food | 4 | |
| Concerned about food issues | 7 | |
| Not concerned about food issues | 3 | |
| 20-25 | 3 | |
| 26-30 | 4 | |
| 31-35 | 3 | |
| A/B | 3 | |
| C1/2 | 5 | |
| D/E | 2 | |
| Have children living with them | 5 | |
| Do not have children living with them | 5 | |

Recruitment Criteria for Group 2

| Description | Quota | Achieved |
|----------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Women | 10 | |
| Preference for British food | 6 | |
| Preference for foreign food | 4 | |
| Concerned about food issues | 7 | |
| Not concerned about food issues | 3 | |
| 36-45 | 3 | |
| 46-55 | 4 | |
| 56-65 | 3 | |
| A/B | 3 | |
| C1/2 | 5 | |
| D/E | 2 | |
| Have children living with them | 6 | |
| Do not have children living them | 4 | |

Recruitment Criteria for Group 3

| Description | Quota | Achieved |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Men | 10 | |
| Preference for British food | 6 | |
| Preference for foreign food | 4 | |
| Concerned about food issues | 7 | |
| Not concerned about food issues | 3 | |
| 36-45 | 4 | |
| 46-55 | 4 | |
| 56-65 | 2 | |
| A/B | 3 | |
| C1/2 | 5 | |
| D/E | 2 | |
| Have children living with them | 5 | |
| Do not have children living with them | 5 | |

Focus Group on Food Choice

The University of Reading invites you to attend a group discussion on food choice.

Date:

Start time:

Finish time:

Venue:

If for any reason you are unable to attend, please contact Angela Groves on.....

Focus Group on Food Choice

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the group discussion.

We are frequently asked to find out what consumers think about various food related topics. To establish this we sometimes need to talk to people like yourselves, and on this occasion we would like you to attend a group discussion to discuss issues relating to food choice.

To establish that we have a cross section of people, you have been asked certain questions about your age and occupation. These details will only be used for the analysis of the data. The information that you give to the interviewers will be kept completely confidential. The name of yourself, and your family will never be disclosed to other companies under any circumstances. As a token of our appreciation you will receive a gift of £20.00.

Please note that the group will be audio taped to enable an accurate analysis of the results to be made.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact Angela Groves on....

We look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully,

Angela Groves

APPENDIX 2: DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What foods do you consider to be 'British foods'?

Use prompts

Do you consider any of these foods to specifically stand out as British foods?

Original Alpen

Corn flakes

Taylors of Harrogate Yorkshire Gold Teabags

Heinz Cream of Tomato soup

Baxters Mediterranean Tomato soup

Sainsbury's creamed rice pudding

Heinz Scottish Vegetable soup with Lentils and beans

Sainsbury's Special Recipe Mediterranean Tomato Soup with Basil (prod of Scotland on can)

Ambrosia creamed rice pudding

Heinz baked beans

Bisto Best full flavour gravy granules

Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce

Tilda Madhur Jaffrey Royal Korma sauce

Extra Virgin Olive oil (Gwynedd Confectioners, Welsh dragon logo)

Branston original pickle

Frank Coopers original oxford marmalade

Duerrs English Traditional thick cut oxford marmalade

Welsh Pantry (A Tradition of Quality) Plum preserve with Brandy and Walnuts

A Gift from Wales - Three fruit marmalade

Colman's original english mustard

Paw Paw Jam (Hand made; Wales)

Oxo Herbs and Spices Italian

Fray Bentos Steak and Kidney pie

Nestle Carnation Evaporated milk (made with British milk)

Cottage delight speciality foods Poachers pickle

Oxo beef gravy with a hint of Colman's Mustard (packet of gravy granules)

Honey from Wales

Honey from Royal Berkshire

Welsh pantry pure honey (welsh pantry also in welsh)

Stockan & Gardens Orkney oat cakes

Pattersons Scottish Oat Cakes

Buxton natural mineral water

Sparkling Decante welsh mountain Natural mineral water

ASDA Lancashire hot pot

Symingtons West country Vegetable soup in a cup

Rhodes to Home Bread and Butter pudding ("The Classic British pudding with a difference")

Welsh Fudge selection (In welsh and English)

Made in Wales - Daffodil Cottage - Welsh mint humbugs
 McVitie's St. Clements Devonshire Cheesecake (....made in Oakhampton, Devon)
 Lincolnshire Vegetarian Sausages
 Daffodil Cottage Butter shortbread (hand baked biscuits)
 Young's - Harry Ramsdens - Chip shop cod steaks
 Lyons Corner House Grannies cake - A traditional light fruit cake....
 San Marco Pizza
 German pizza
 Italian Pizza - JS with Italian made base, topped in UK
 JS - UK made - same flavour as previous
 Marmite
 Maderia cake
 Eccles cake
 Bakewell tarts
 President camembert
 French Camembert
 Somerset Camembert
 Sausages

2. What makes you consider these foods to 'British foods'?

3. Do you look to see whether a food is produced in Britain when you are shopping?

- To what extent is this based on product category?
- Is country of (origin)/British only mentioned for specific products?
- What products?

See response to q. 2 for what makes something British, how the country of origin of food is communicated.

4. How would you describe the quality of foods produced in this country?

- British foods that are produced in this country?
- Foreign style foods made in Britain? - Foods 'traditionally' not associated with this country?
- Agricultural/products that have under-gone minimal processing?
- British 'style' foods

5. What makes British products favourable to foreign products? / What is it about the attributes of British products (elements of Britishness) that would lead to their selection?

- Attributes that make British products superior?
- General attributes or product specific attributes?
- Natural products compared to processed product?

6. Is being produced in this country more important for certain foods?

Authenticity

7. What does authenticity mean to you, in general terms, not just in relation to food?

8. Do you consider any of these to be authentic products?

Use existing products (see q. 1)

9. For which products is authenticity important?

10. What makes a product an authentic British food?

- Perceived authenticity (relating more specifically to regional foods) (Kuzensof *et al.* 1997):
- Product related factors
 - Name
 - Label
 - Packaging
 - Appearance
 - Product description
- Situational Factors
 - Tourist/visitor
 - Catering establishment
 - Retail outlet
- Personal factors
 - Knowledge
 - Experience
- **What else?**