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Food in Tourism and the Role of the Artisan Food Producer in Ireland: A Phenomenological Study

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Food in Tourism and the Role of the Artisan Food Producer in Ireland: A Phenomenological Study.

A thesis submitted to Technological University Dublin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Gastronomy and Food Studies

by

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May 2021

Declaration of Authorship

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of the Master's in Gastronomy and Food Studies is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

“Food is our common ground, a universal experience”

- James Beard

This research study examines the role that the artisan food producer plays, as a food tourism provider, in food in tourism in Ireland. With the increasing convergence of food and tourism, food *in* tourism has become both a lever for economic prosperity as well as a draw for visitors who are seeking authentic food experiences that connect them to people, place and culture. Sitting between production and consumption, artisan food producers, as purveyors of handcrafted foods, are uniquely placed to meet visitors’ expectations and help achieve these economic objectives. Considering then, the important role they play, and look set to continue to play, their voice is conspicuously absent from the literature. Consequently, this study aimed to provide a more detailed view of the artisan food producers’ role in food in tourism in the everyday, from a lived experience perspective, using a phenomenological paradigm, to add their voice to the literature. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was used as part of the methodological approach, resulting in four subordinate themes developing from the data findings.

The research findings provide a more in-depth and nuanced view of the artisan food producer than was previously available, in terms of their motivations, focusing on areas such as passion and education, while also highlighting a number of key challenges and obstacles they face as small producers, while navigating the complex operating environment they exist in, from a government and agency perspective. The findings also examine the food in tourism experience they provide and considers some emerging themes such as risk of loss of the artisan food producer and food fraud, all experienced by them in their food in tourism role.

While adding their voice to the literature, these findings also suggest that there are opportunities to restructure the administrative frameworks that currently exist to enable rather than impede success, while also recognising in parallel that a representative artisan food producer council could strengthen their position within the food and tourism landscape, helping to address a number of the key challenges identified. The findings also indicate that efforts are required to combat the issue of food fraud, understanding the severe impact it can have on both the artisan food producer and Ireland’s food in tourism reputation, and offers opportunities for further research.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.0 Chapter 1 - Introduction to Research Study:

1.1 Working Title:

Food in tourism and the role of the artisan food producer in Ireland: A phenomenological study.

1.2 Introduction:

The future of food in tourism is on a significant growth trajectory globally, with Yeoman (2012) forecasting that by 2050, 4.2 billion people will take at least one international holiday annually, compared to approximately 1 billion today (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2016). In parallel, the Institute for the Future (IFTF) in their 2008 report on the future of small businesses, predicts the emergence of the artisan economy, positing that artisans would re-emerge as an economic force over the next decade, reviving craftsmanship and knowledge in response to globalised industrialisation and an increasing consumer demand for niche and specialised products, underpinned by entrepreneurs' desire for a much-improved work/life balance, suggesting that there is a significant role for artisan producers to play in food in tourism in Ireland, not just today, but into the future.

1.3 Rationale and Justification for Research:

At a high level the focus for this research is food tourism and the artisan food producer, narrowing down to examining the artisan food producer in their role as a food tourism provider in food in tourism in Ireland.

Recognising the value of the artisan food producer to food, tourism and food in tourism, there are numerous government strategies and frameworks in place (DAFM, 2010; DAFM, 2015; Bord Bia, 2020; Teagasc, 2020; Fáilte Ireland, 2014; 2018; 2019), all underpinned by their overall contribution to Ireland's economy. In addition, visitors are also increasingly seeking authentic and sustainable food experiences that connect them to local people and place (Richards, 2002; Sims, 2009; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Henderson, 2009), which conceivably the artisan food producer is well placed to provide, as creators of specialised food, and as the providers of the environments within which it is often consumed, thereby contributing to a destination's attractiveness (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015).

However, of note is that the voice of artisan food producers is absent in the literature, in terms of the role they play in food in tourism in Ireland, in meeting the expectations of both

policy makers and visitors. Considering then their significant contribution to connecting visitors to food experiences within food in tourism (Richards, 2002), as well as to the economy, it is important that as a key stakeholder they are represented in the literature, reflecting their knowledge, experience and participation in food in tourism, to both inform and enhance key food tourism strategies and initiatives existing now and into the future.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives:

Research Aim

To capture the lived experiences of artisan producers in their role as food tourism providers in food tourism in Ireland in order to add their voice to the existing literature.

Main Research Question

What are the lived experiences of artisan producers in their role as food tourism providers in food tourism in Ireland?

Research Objectives

- What is food tourism?
- What is food in tourism in Ireland?
- Who are the artisan food producers and how do they perceive their role in food in tourism?
- How do existing government strategies and agencies support artisan food producers in a food in tourism role?
- How important is the visitor's experience to the artisan food producer?

1.5 Outline of Research:

This research study adopts a qualitative approach using a phenomenological paradigm and is discussed in detail in chapter three, which outlines the methodological underpinnings. The research involved interviewing a selection of artisan food producers from various locations around the island of Ireland, across a varied selection of artisan food products, and is focused on present day.

1.6 Outline of Research Chapters:

The body of the research is made up of six chapters and a summary of each are as follows:

Chapter 1 – This chapter introduces the research topic and sets out the high-level rationale and justification for the research, identifies the key aims and objectives of the research and acknowledges the research methodology.

Chapter 2 – The literature review analyses the extant literature covering the topics of food tourism and the artisan food producer. It defines food tourism and food in tourism in Ireland, while also examining the importance of the food in tourism experience, the artisan food producer as entrepreneur and their links to culture, heritage and tradition, while considering the economic drivers that underpin food in tourism in Ireland, setting the context for the primary research that follows.

Chapter 3 – This chapter outlines the methodology approach for this research, including the philosophical perspective and the research methods used.

Chapter 4 – This chapter provides a presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings from the primary research, which are presented under four subordinate themes, each with a number of sub themes that answer the research questions and is discussed in the context of the existing literature.

Chapter 5 – This is the final chapter of the research and is where the researcher draws their conclusions based on the research presented in chapter four in reference to the aims and objective set out in chapter one. This chapter also includes recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.0 Chapter 2 - Literature review:

2.1 Introduction:

From an economic perspective, tourism, with the value add of food in tourism latterly, is seen as a significant revenue generator for many countries (FaladeObalade and Dubey, 2014) expounding why food tourism has become increasingly important to Ireland's tourism proposition, resulting in Fáilte Ireland (2018), Ireland's National Tourism Development Authority, developing a stand-alone strategy dedicated to developing and promoting food as an essential component of the visitor experience.

Contemporaneously, in response to increased globalisation, food culture has arguably shifted as people are thinking locally and revalorising local foods and traditions (Richards, 2002; Sage, 2010), providing numerous positive impacts ranging from increased support for local businesses and the subsequent benefits for the economy, communities and the people living within them (Boyne and Hall, 2003), to promoting sustainability and protecting the environment (Che, 2006), amongst others. Additionally, the expectations of visitors have also shifted, as they increasingly seek local, authentic and novel food experiences while travelling (Richards, 2002).

Arguably, it is this convergence of economics and food culture that has led policymakers to recognise that the role of the artisan food producer can add value to both tourism, food in tourism and subsequently the economy, resulting in their inclusion in numerous agrifood and food in tourism strategies, iterated over recent years (DAFM, 2010, 2015; Bord Bia, 2020; Fáilte Ireland, 2014, 2018, 2019; Teagasc, 2020). These strategies outline how artisan food producers can enhance the visitor experience via their role in food *in* tourism, adding to a destination's attractiveness (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015), creating a lever for economic prosperity.

This review examines the existing literature to contextualise the current food in tourism landscape and establish the role the artisan food producer plays within it, against which their lived experience in the every-day, as an output of this study's primary research, can be considered, providing an opportunity to add their voice to the literature.

2.2 Food Tourism Overview:

Predating food tourism, wine tourism was established as a popular leisure pursuit in the 1990s, precipitating an interest in wine tourism research from the mid-1990s onwards

(Mitchell and Hall, 2006), a decade ahead of food tourism research which only began to appear around 2005 (Getz et al., 2014). During the intervening years, along with wine, arguably people's interest in food has developed, and food tourism has experienced a significant growth meaning that today it has become "one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism" (UNWTO, 2012, p.5). Food tourism can be defined as a "visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel" (Hall and Sharples, 2003, p.6). However, it is important to note that within the tourism literature there are a number of other terms referenced when discussing food tourism, such as 'culinary tourism' and 'gastronomic tourism', which together with 'food tourism' represent the most commonly used (Ignatov and Smith, 2006; McKercher et al. 2008; Henderson, 2009; Horng and Tsai, 2010; Richards, 2002, Long, 2004), although they can often be used interchangeably by some academics (Horng and Tsai, 2012; Ellis et al., 2018), and arguably by tourists themselves, depending on their level of knowledge and motivation.

Ellis et al. (2018) posits that the term 'culinary tourism' is often used to link food and culture which emphasises "a relationship between the insider and outsider", that the term 'food tourism' suggests the "physical embodied and sensual experience itself" and 'gastronomic tourism' "concerns the place of food in the culture of the host" (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 253) and arguably for many tourists, their experience of food in tourism is most often a combination of these. 'Food tourism' appears as the term most commonly used in both the academic literature (Collinson, 2018; Everett, 2012; Broadway, 2017) and the grey literature published by government departments, agencies and stakeholders, when discussing food in tourism in Ireland, appearing in multiple white papers such as the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine's (DAFM) *Foodwise 2025* (2015) and Fáilte Ireland's *Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023* (2018), as examples, and thus is the term that will be commonly used in this research, as relevant.

Academic literature acknowledges the important role that food plays in tourism and is well reviewed from numerous angles including destination attraction (Ab Karim and Geng-qing Chi, 2010; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015), connecting people to place through the medium of food (Hall and Sharples, 2003; Henderson, 2009), heritage (Bessière, 1998; Mac Con Iomaire, 2018), destination marketing (du Rand and Heath, 2008), economic development (Sidalı et al., 2013), sustainability (Sims, 2009), as well as an opportunity for

tourists to satisfy their curiosity of the ‘other’ (Long, 2004), as examples. Gastronomy (food and drink) has also been identified as a key influencer in how tourists experience a destination (Kivela and Crofts, 2006) and with tourists demonstrating a growing interest in participating in food related activities, such as cooking classes, attending food events and visits to food production sites, as examples (Bessière, 1998, Che, 2006), from a cultural anthropology perspective, artisan food producers play a key role in the food in tourism experience through food tastings and connections to local menus.

Governments too have recognised the value of food in tourism beyond just the economic returns of food tourism itself, viewing it as a tool for rural development (Boyne et al., 2003), employment generation (Henderson, 2009) and as a mechanism to attract foreign direct investment (FaladeObalade and Dubey, 2014; DTTAS, 2019). From this economic perspective, arguably the growing artisan food sector is playing an increasing role in promoting Ireland’s food reputation abroad, which is also being used via tourism imagery to increase its desirability as a place to invest (DTTAS, 2019).

2.3 The Evolution of Food in Tourism in Ireland:

Much has been written about the historic role the potato has played in Ireland’s diet (Lucas, 1960; Cullen, 1981; Mac Con Iomaire and Gallagher, 2009) and in today’s popular culture while tourists may still associate Ireland with the potato, arguably our national menu has developed considerably since then. In the 1960s, Myrtle Allen (1924-2018), the doyenne of Irish food, was a driving force in Ireland’s food resurgence. Recognising the value of local and artisan food long before others, at odds with the times, she arguably brought a new style of dining to the table, from the restaurant in her country home (Allen, 2015). More recently, there has been a renewed focus on local, sustainable and seasonal food combined with the championing of producers and artisans and nurturing talented chefs, resulting in what Mac Con Iomaire (2018) has called an Irish food renaissance. And while Ireland has long held a strong reputation for food quality, it is only in the last twelve years or so that significant efforts have been made to integrate food into its overall tourism strategy when following the recession, John Mulcahy, former head of food tourism at Fáilte Ireland, recognised that food had the potential to play a much more central role in tourism, to both drive the economy and have a positive impact on tourism in general, with Mac Con Iomaire et al. (2019, p. 195) stating that he was “instrumental in the shaping and implementing of a food tourism / food *in* tourism policy and strategy in Ireland from 2008-2018”.

Since 2010, Fáilte Ireland has promoted Irish food as part of its national and regional marketing strategy. It began with a focus on leveraging the agri-food industry's strong reputation for quality food exports, a successful drinks industry, and Ireland's renown for warm hospitality, and following a number of iterations led to the current *Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023* (2018), which now aims to shift consumer perceptions of Irish food from great ingredients to great cuisine by "enhancing our national menu and amplifying its strong connection to people and authentic place" (Fáilte Ireland, 2018, p. 14). In so doing, Fáilte Ireland has chosen to adopt a wider ranging definition to represent the role of food in Ireland's food tourism approach which states that: "Food Tourism includes any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates and/or consumes food and drink that reflects the local cuisine and culture of a place" (OCTA, 2015, cited in Fáilte Ireland, 2018, p. 9). This definition arguably serves to illuminate the integral role artisan food producers must play then in order to deliver this experience. And when compared to Hall and Sharples' (2003) definition of food tourism, it is certainly a broader one, as it accounts for food *in* tourism, as every visitor, domestic and international, must eat during their stay, not just those who have a particular interest in food, or those who may have travelled for food experiences specifically.

Research undertaken recently by Fáilte Ireland (2019) identified some key reasons why domestic and international tourists holiday in Ireland - interesting history, heritage and culture, beautiful scenery, natural attractions, hospitality, as well as activities like walking, sports, events and festivals amongst others. Recognising then that most visitors do not visit Ireland for its food offering alone as "food is seldom the key reason for visiting a destination and most often is considered as part of the overall destination experience" (Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Long, 2003; Selwood, 2003, cited in du Rand & Heath, 2006, p. 209), the food tourism proposition has been integrated into all aspects of tourist destinations, reinforcing the country's food *in* tourism approach. However, by integrating the nation's food story into the overall way visitors experience destinations, it arguably highlights the key importance then of getting that experience right.

2.4 The Importance of Ireland's Food in Tourism Experience:

While food may not yet be a key reason visitors travel to Ireland, research shows that approximately 90% of those that travel, do however expect high quality food and drink experiences while on their trip (Fáilte Ireland, 2019), with visitors confirming that their

experience of local food and drink is mainly “satisfied through the smell, taste and visual image of local food” (Kim et al., 2009, p. 427). Considering this, Fáilte Ireland in line with their food *in* tourism approach is focused on ensuring that visitors’ experiences with the food they encounter across Ireland are consistently great and is underpinned by a strategy of “increasing the number of businesses engaged with creating an ‘Irish food movement’” (2018, p. 5), in order to make this outcome a reality.

This has resulted in the creation of a number of successful food initiatives, food trails and events, often integrated into the existing experience brands, such as Ireland’s Ancient East or the Wild Atlantic Way, supported by regional authorities, in conjunction with numerous food tourism networks around the country, such as Boyne Valley and The Burren as examples (Fáilte Ireland, 2018). Within this foodscape, arguably artisan food producers have numerous opportunities to engage in providing great food experiences to visitors, be it through their food featuring on local menus, participating in established (or new) food trails and events, farmers’ markets and stand-alone on-site visits, as examples.

2.5 The Experience Economy:

Moving into the 2000s many destinations in their rush to distinguish themselves and attract the cultural tourist ended up with similar offerings, leading to increased competitiveness at the same time as tourists were trending towards a desire for more engaged experiences (Richards, 2014). This evolution from products and services to experiences had been identified by Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 3), who outlined that “commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable”. Indeed Firat (2001) recognised that there is a “growing quest on the part of the contemporary consumers for immersion into varied experiences” (in Carù and Cova, 2003, p. 271).

Today, the experiences that tourists are looking for have evolved, no longer happy with just being provided with an experience, they also want to be involved in co-creating them (Richards, 2015), meaning that they want an input into how experiences are shaped, so that they can be an active participant in, rather than just a passive consumer of them. Additionally, Fáilte Ireland (2018) outlines four components that they consider key to the food tourism experience – the product must be authentic, the service must be of high quality, the story must be distinctive, and the narration must have a unique character.

So, what does this mean? Arguably, similarly to how wine tourism has developed, visitors now want to do more than just taste the product (Cambourne and Macionis, 2000) and as

consumption is more than just eating or drinking, “involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun encompassed by what we call the ‘experiential view’” (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132), it means visitors want to meet the makers, hear their story, view where the ingredients are grown or reared, connect to local culture and traditions and get involved in making it if possible. Then afterward, sit down in commensality to enjoy it and before leaving have an opportunity to purchase some products to take home as gifts or souvenirs to display their newly acquired cultural capital through their knowledge of food from new places (Richards, 2002; Henderson, 2004), perhaps posting a photo online to preserve the memory. Food and drink are sensory and pleasurable and so lend themselves very well to these type of creative and participative experiences which engage visitors, as it can be viewed, touched, smelled and tasted, all in the pursuit of enjoyment (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

2.6 What Constitutes a Good Experience?

Considering food as sensory (Kivela and Crofts, 2006) would suggest that the food tourism products offering the best opportunities for artisan food producers to provide the experiences that visitors are looking for, are similar to those first established in wine tourism, tourism products such as food tours and trails, on-site food tastings, food festivals and tours of artisan food producers’ production spaces, which can be the farm, the mill, or the distillery, as examples (Mitchell and Hall, 2006).

Actively engaging in an activity or learning experience helps visitors to make a stronger connection to a place, making a visit to a destination more memorable and arguably the experiences artisan food producers provide have the power to influence the visitor’s perception of Ireland’s food brand either positively or negatively. A positive memorable tourist experience (MTE) has been defined operationally as “a tourism experience positively remembered or recalled after the event has occurred” (Kim et al., 2010, p. 13), and significantly it is these memories that people take home and talk about to others, bringing the intangible nature of a destination to life. Individually, or as part of a food network offering tasting trails or leveraging one of Fáilte Ireland’s experience brand such as the Wild Atlantic Way, artisan producers are well placed to provide, not only opportunities for tourists to learn about food, but also to engage with them and provide experiences they can actively participate in, which is a good example of co-creation and creativity (Richards, 2012).

Artisan food producers also play an integral role in Fáilte Ireland's *Taste the Island – a Celebration of Ireland's Food and Drink 2019-2021* (2019), which encourages visitors to discover and engage with multiple food and drink experiences (in off-season) to renew appreciation for Ireland's food culture both at home and abroad, and research has shown that the servicescape provided by artisan producers delivering food experiences is also important as it “reinforces the relationship between the environment in which food is produced and the development of destination image and brand” (Hall and Mitchell, 2005, p. 86). As well as consuming food within a destination, artisan producers of food and drink offer tourists an opportunity to purchase products either on site, or through local shops, and these can also be taken home as souvenirs for family and friends as “food products can also be used to display the cultural capital gained on holiday, by cooking for and entertaining friends on [their] return from holiday” (Richards, 2002, p. 15). Especially likely to buy are those most interested in authenticity, hospitality and local traditions (Richards, 2002).

To create experiences that customers love requires an ‘outside in’ approach. “An outside-in perspective means that businesses aim to creatively deliver something of value to customers, rather than focus simply on products and sales” (Gilbert, 2010). Consequently, artisan food producers need to be innovative and keep their finger on the pulse of their business in order to stay ahead of shifting tourist expectations. One way to do this is to leverage their regular face-to-face interactions with their visitors to garner feedback on both their products and the experience provided in order to effectively curate their offering (Everett, 2012), creating a symbiotic relationship in the process. Richards (2012, p. 24) posits that “producers need to get closer to consumers to understand and monitor fast-moving consumption trends and consumers increasingly want to be involved in the production process, either as a means of distinguishing themselves from other consumers, or acquiring new skills, [to get] ‘inside’ local culture”.

In considering therefore, both the academic and industry literature, artisan food producers would arguably appear to be well positioned to provide the type of engaging experiences contemporary tourists are looking for. However, absent from the literature and therefore of interest here, is how artisan food producers meaningfully translate this knowledge into their business models, as without the business acumen and know-how, it could lead to challenges in delivery within destinations as some businesses “might not see themselves as part of the tourism industry” (Wolf, 2004 cited in Henderson, 2004, p. 70), so further research is required to understand how this is experienced and supported on the ground.

2.7 The Concept of ‘Third Space’:

Arguably then, well-constructed experiences that involve the participation of the visitor rather than just observing them provides the framework within which they actively and creatively experience a “taste of place” that is memorable. These memories contribute to a visitors’ overall impression of a destination and can enhance their post-visit satisfaction, potentially encouraging them to visit a destination again (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014; Ab Karim and Geng-Qing Chi, 2010).

A consideration here is that in providing food tourism experiences, business sites become visitor attractions, and based on regulations (health), processes (safety) and production efficiencies, it may require the artisan producer to provide these experiences in what Everett (2012, p. 548) calls “third space[s]”, where environments are sanitised or constructed in such a way as to separate the visitor from the production area, through perhaps a viewing window, in order to provide particular elements of a visitor experience in the first place. In turn this could have the effect of rendering the experience inauthentic as food artisans try to “balance an authentic production experience within [what could be seen as an] ‘inauthentic’ space” (Everett, 2012, p. 549) and this is worthy of consideration from the perspective of not just producers in general, but the artisan producer specifically, as they are often considered by visitors to be providers of authentic experiences through their food (Sims, 2009).

2.8 Who is the Artisan Food Producer?

Relied on to be a part of Ireland’s food movement to deliver engaged and memorable experiences to visitors (Fáilte Ireland, 2018; Kim et al., 2009; Richards, 2014), who then is the artisan food producer? On review, there is no one definition that classifies artisan food production/producers definitively, other than a tacit understanding that it requires local raw material to produce a product, manual input from the maker, and has a connection to local culture and traditions (UNESCO, 1997).

From a business and enterprise rationale, the Food Safety Authority for Ireland (FSAI) published *Guidance Note 29: Use of Marketing Terms* in 2015, which objectively states that the terms artisan/artisanal can only be used by businesses who can legitimately claim that the food is made in limited quantities by skilled craftspeople, highlighting that the processing method cannot be fully mechanised and must follow a traditional method. In addition, the food must be made in a micro-enterprise in a single location and the characteristic

ingredient(s) used in the food need to be grown or produced locally, where practical and seasonally available. (fsai.ie, 2015).

The FSAI in relation to what they recognise as Ireland's specialty food sector, also provides guidance on a number of other terms, such as: "'farmhouse' (must be made on a farm using locally grown or produced ingredients), and 'traditional' (must be made to a traditional recipe that can be proved to exist for at least 30 years)" (fsai.ie, 2015, p. 4-5). A skilled craftsperson is defined as someone who has a special expertise in making food in a 'traditional' manner (fsaie.ie, 2015), so arguably these three terms are interchangeable, or a producer could in fact be a hybrid of these and market themselves as such. Of note is that both artisan and farmhouse products must be made using locally grown or produced ingredients (designated as 100km from the location of the business), and only by micro-enterprises, which delimits businesses' ability to exceed a certain size, beyond which they can no longer classify or market their products using these terms (fsai.ie, 2015). From the perspective of the artisan producer, this could potentially lead to conflict when Ireland's agri-food sector is so focused on growth and exports wanting to "create a pipeline of companies growing beyond Artisan/Small Food Business definition" (DAFM, 2015, p. 87), but arguably as a food tourism provider, it links them inextricably to local food and ensures that artisans' speciality foods stay true to their origins, protecting them from corporate industrial competitors who could otherwise disingenuously leverage these terms for profit.

From a cultural perspective, more subjectively, Irish food writer John McKenna articulating a connection between food, people and place, expresses that "artisan food is defined by 4 Ps – the place, the person, the product and passion" commenting that "if a food represented a person's creativity, reflected the place it came from, was a defining example of that type of food, and was driven by the need to be the best that it could possibly be, then it was true artisan food" (guides.ie, 2020, n.p.).

2.9 The Role of the Artisan Food Producer:

The artisan food producer then is both a business enterprise and a purveyor (and preserver) of food culture and arguably their role sits within both the production and consumption of food in tourism. On the one hand, from an economic perspective as well as within the applied field of tourism management, food tourism is a business (Getz et al. 2014), and within that space, artisan food producers must operate viably to be successful, and in so doing they contribute to rural development and local economies (Ibery and Kneafsey, 1999; Sidali et al., 2013).

On the other, through the lens of cultural anthropology, they are important providers of both the food and drink experiences and often the environment through which tourists experience a destination (Getz et al. 2014; Kivela and Crotts, 2004; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000), as they look to connect to local culture and heritage through authentic experiences (Sims, 2009; Bessièrè, 1998; Boniface, 2016), which arguably artisan producers are well positioned to provide as purveyors of hand-crafted, traditional and/or farm produced foodstuffs.

Today multiple artisan food producers produce a wide array of products using traditional methods, many on site where the ingredients are grown or reared, ranging from traditional black pudding from McCarthy's of Kanturk, cheeses and charcuterie from Gubbeen House Co. Cork, apple ciders, gins and vinegars from Highbank Orchards in Kilkenny, full fat yogurt from "happy" cows made by Glenilen in West Cork and wild smoked fish from Woodcock Smokery also in Cork, all with links to local history, culture and heritage. In addition, seaweed, historically a traditional ingredient on the Irish menu, is now produced by approximately twenty producers in Ireland, the Wild Irish Seaweed company being one example (Collinson, 2018). These are the types of food that Boniface (2016, p. 141) suggest that tourists see as "traditional, wholesome, fundamental, real, authentic, and artisan delivered, and 'true' in some way" and as a counterbalance to mass and industrialised production these foods are considered as "having depth, and heritage and [a] good cultural 'story'" (Ibid), which arguably adds to the visitors' experience of food in tourism when they encounter it, and highlighting once again the importance of the experience.

2.10 Exploring Culture and Heritage Through Local Artisan Food:

Through the lens of cultural anthropology arguably artisan food producers provide a bridge connecting the experience of food to that of the destination. Often tourists are in search of an authentic cultural experience which they look for in local foods and eating places, a desire to experience a taste of place so to speak, and this can be a key motivator in destination choice (Reynolds, 1993; Richards, 2002; Boniface, 2016). In recent years there has been a growing consumer demand for specialised food and drink products and research has shown that locally produced food is seen as a link to heritage and the countryside and offers tourists an escape from busy lives (Bessièrè, 1998). Tourists have become increasingly interested in learning about the heritage, culture and history of the places they visit (Richards and Raymond, 2000) and local artisan foods are seen as "authentic products that symbolise the place and culture of [a] destination" (Sims, 2009, p. 321).

Confirmed as key reasons why visitors travel to/around Ireland (Fáilte Ireland, 2019), culture can be experienced through visits to heritage sites and places of exceptional beauty, like for example the Burren in Co. Clare, exploring the countryside, as well as through numerous museums, galleries, castles, and gardens, as examples. In addition, exploring culture includes not only these activities, but also festivals, artistic performances and events within culture, as well as the “historical, traditional and contemporary (“living”) aspects of our indigenous culture, which gives the visitor an insight into our unique cultural identity, way of thinking and distinct sense of place” (Fáilte Ireland, 2012, p. 6).

Heritage then is a huge draw for tourists and can be seen as a link to a rural past that is rapidly disappearing in a modern world (Storey, 2017). Richards (2012, p. 14) posits that food is “a key part of all cultures, a major element of global intangible heritage and an increasing important attraction for tourists” and while some exponents may argue that Ireland failed to develop a distinctive food culture of its own (Diner, 2001), there are others who argue that food is indeed a key element of Ireland’s intangible cultural heritage which significantly contributes to food tourism because “engaging and celebrating our food stories enable us to provide and enjoy more authentic food experiences” (Mac Con Iomaire, 2018, p. 109).

Aiming to bridge the gap between economics and culture, the DAFM recognises that in order to further develop agri-food in Ireland with a view to creating employment, it must think beyond “the strict definition of ‘food production’ to incorporate cultural products linked to the environment and tourism” (DAFM, 2010, p. 12), outlining how an integrated agri-food and tourism strategy can serve the growing segment of tourists interested in “authentic, culinary experiences from food trails to cookery courses” (DAFM, 2010, p.12). As artisan food producers are embedded across the country arguably there are numerous opportunities for visitors to encounter their food, through experience brands such as the Wild Atlantic Way or Ireland’s Ancient East, local food trails, and on-site visits to meet the maker, as examples. These provide opportunities for visitors to experience local farmers’ markets and festivals and participate in tasting artisan food, through the menus of local accommodations, cafés and restaurants, thereby linking visitors to local traditions, as well as to the landscape, culture and heritage of a destination, enhancing and amplifying local food stories.

Absent from the literature and therefore of interest here, is whether artisan food producers are then utilising distinct and unique stories and narratives, considered key elements of a good

food in tourism experience (Fáilte Ireland, 2018; Boniface, 2016), when they interact with visitors, thereby making it a reality on the ground.

2.11 Tourists' Search for Authenticity in Local Artisan Food:

Referencing back to John McKenna (2020), artisan food is also intimately connected to local people and places, and this connection is often what tourists are searching for in their food tourism experiences (Sims, 2009). As creators of specialised and/or traditional food, artisan food producers are integral to meeting the increasing consumer demand for local, sustainable and authentic food experiences (Richards, 2002), which connect visitors, both domestic and international, to a taste of place.

Local and artisan food has gained popularity as a means to counteract the increased globalisation and McDonaldisation of food (Richards, 2002; Hall and Mitchell, 2003), as consumers in general rethink their role as citizens in terms of what makes a “good life” really (Soper, 2004), influencing tourists to make choices that positively impact sustainability and support local economies (Che, 2006), and is echoed by the World Travel Organisation (UNWTO) who outlined in their 2012 *Global Report on Food Tourism*, that food tourism and the appreciation for artisan producers is on the rise stating that “people are voting with their feet and wallets for good, clean, fair food” (UNWTO, 2012, p. 22).

Interestingly this shift to local has become even more central in response to the current Covid-19 pandemic which has emphasised the relevance of local food production and the value of short food supply chains globally (Cappelli and Cini, 2020) and research suggests that changes like this will continue to influence consumer behaviour post-pandemic (Bord Bia, 2020). While this research was conducted in Ireland, arguably it is likely that other countries are also experiencing similar shifts, therefore providing an opportunity for local artisan food producers to exploit this shift when both domestic and international travel begins again.

There is also a belief that local food is tastier, healthier and safer in terms of traceability (Miroso and Lawson, 2012). Tourists are increasingly viewing local food as traditional, authentic, pure and simple, as well as special and (sometimes) new (Sims, 2009; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014), meaning that “local food is an important tourist attraction and central to the tourist experience” (Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014, p. 304), irrespective of whether they are specifically interested in food or have a more functional food for fuel approach to it. This is key, because as previously noted, the success of Fáilte Ireland’s (2018) food tourism

strategy relies on delivering quality local food experiences to visitors wherever they find themselves, and while the term local can be contested from a producer, consumer and a tourist perspective (Sims, 2009; 2010; Carroll and Fahy, 2014), the fact that artisan and specialty food producers must use ingredients from within a 100 km radius ensures their embeddedness in the local supply chain both horizontally and vertically (Bowen, 2011), which could arguably reinforce tourist's notion of authenticity.

Indeed, Sims (2009, p. 324) suggests that demands for foods perceived to be local and traditional can be considered as “linked to a quest for authenticity”, while calling out that authenticity is also a contested term by many academics (Taylor, 2001; Bell and Valentine, 1997; Jackson, 1999; Hughes, 1995; Wang, 1999; Yeoman et al., 2006; Clark et al., 2007; Cohen, 2002; 2007 cited in Sims, 2009), leading to a recommendation that to understand it best is to do so from the tourist's understanding of authenticity, and what they are looking to experience or sustain, whether that be a taste of place, addressing environmental concerns, escape from modern inauthentic life, conserve traditions and landscapes or just to reconnect with places and people that produce the food they eat (Sims, 2009).

Linking back to the importance of the overall tourist experience, this would suggest a requirement for the artisan producer to understand visitor motivation clearly in order to provide the environment and experiences that tourists are seeking, in order to be successful in the food in tourism space.

2.12 Artisan Food – A Medium for Preserving Culture, Heritage and Traditions

Understanding then the importance of food as an element of, as well as a vehicle to explore and experience, the culture, heritage and traditions of places, arguably it is important to preserve and protect it and Mac Con Iomaire (2018, p. 109) posits that our food stories not only allow for more authentic food experiences but also help to “safeguard our intangible cultural food heritage for the next generations”. To this end, there are a number of artisan organisations, or communities, whose aim is to ensure that those connected to telling those food stories along with the traditions, methods and heritage links through which they are conveyed, are protected.

Myrtle Allen was instrumental in establishing Euro-Toques Ireland in 1986 (Allen, 2015), with an aim to preserve Irish culinary heritage and traditional cooking methods, encouraging knowledge exchange, while also promoting producers of local and artisan products as well. Part of an international association, they also look to the future, inspiring young chefs

through its annual young chef competition. Others, such as the Slow Food movement, also in Ireland, was founded in 1989 by Carlo Petrini, and has its roots in its “attention and reverence to traditional, artisan-produced food” (Boniface, 2016, p. 11) through the presidia and the Ark of Taste (Buittati, 2011) and champions the ethos of good, clean, fair food (Slow Food Ireland, 2020).

Developed in Quebec, the Économusée is a global organisation with branches in both the north and south of Ireland. They are also concerned with preserving and promoting artisans’ traditions and skills to protect cultural heritage, and in addition aim to connect travellers to artisans through “experiential cultural tourism” (economusees.com/Ireland, 2021, n.p.), and currently includes St. Tola Goats Cheese, Kelly’s Butchers and the Connemara Smokehouse in the South of Ireland and Broighter Gold Rapeseed Oil in the North of Ireland. Of interest here is that the northern branch has a higher membership of artisan producers than the South, and further investigation is required.

Considering then the strong connection that artisan food producers arguably have to culture, heritage and traditions through their food, it is of interest to understand how they perceive their role in preserving and protecting it, either in conjunction with these organisations or individually, and how this might impact their food in tourism role overall.

2.13 Agriculture and Agritourism – Links to Artisan Food:

Additionally, when we consider the importance of place, artisan food producers are often connected directly to the farms where their products are made. Artisan food production of high value, small scale products with a closer link to customers can be seen as an outcome of a shift to a globalised agricultural system over recent decades (Hall and Mitchell, 2005). Beer et al. (2002, p. 215) posits that “the real artisan is the farmer” and Van der Ploeg (2008) suggests that “the recovery of craftsmanship” as a means to directly manage production processes is a way to reconnect the farm to local economies (in Sage, 2010, p. 91).

Participating therefore in agritourism or farm tourism (which sits within rural tourism), allows the farmer/artisan to connect visitors with food directly, inextricably linking local food production to tourism (Richards, 2002). This supports both farm diversification, which offers opportunities to counter the impacts of industrialised farming and falling prices, as well as allowing them to share culinary knowledge and heritage and demonstrate how local food is produced (Getz et al., 2014; Che, 2006), while in a countryside environment, a landscape which Urry (1992) distinguishes as part of the tourist’s ‘visual gaze’ or ‘tourist gaze’.

While there appears to be no one definition of agritourism in the literature, it can be said that it encompasses visitors touring rural areas renowned for their produce, to learn about food and how it is produced, and can include farm stays, facilitate farm-gate shopping as well as include visits to farmers' markets (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013), but markedly absent is a connection between the farmer/producer and any links to food tasting experiences. On review, there appears to be a gap in the literature in terms of the role the artisan food producer plays in agritourism. This is revealing, as from an Irish perspective the government recognises a clear link between artisan food producers and the role they play, in what they term 'agri-food tourism', with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Charlie McConalogue T.D., in a recent call for agri-food tourism initiatives to fund, stating that "agri-food tourism is of great importance for rural areas. It allows rural Ireland to showcase its people, landscape, history and culture through agricultural produce, food and drink and local cuisine. Funding [these] allows rural businesses, including farmers, producers and artisans, to develop their products and services, connect with the community and visitors and improve the rural experience" (gov.ie, 2021), and this potentially offers opportunities for further research in terms of how artisan food producers experience this at the coalface.

2.14 The Artisan Food Producer as Entrepreneur:

In order to play a cultural role in connecting artisan food to people and place, the artisan producer must exist as a business enterprise. Linked to the cultural and creative industries, artisan entrepreneurs are people who "use their skilled trade – especially involving working with the hands – to discover or create, evaluate and exploit opportunities for new goods, materials, processes, ways of organising and markets" (Ratten et al., 2019, p. 583) and arguably from a food perspective, it can include those who create or recreate traditional products in new and contemporary ways as well.

From a food tourism perspective, Hardin Kapp (2017, p. 478) posits that since the 2008 global recession not only has food tourism become a key focus, but that it has also facilitated the emergence of the artisan economy which "is being developed by a diverse group of entrepreneurs", particularly amongst millennials, and certainly this timing aligns with Ireland's shift to food tourism development (Mac Con Iomaire et al., 2019), as noted previously.

From an economic perspective, when considering the motivations of artisan food entrepreneurs particularly, there has been debate as to whether they are, because of the craft-

based nature of their production, more inclined to follow a low-growth, lifestyle-oriented approach rather than the more traditional growth/profit model of other start-ups (Treager, 2005). Research suggests however that this may be a flexible phenomenon dependent on the buoyancy of the markets within which they operate – strong markets support sales that make it easy to align commercial and lifestyle goals and these become mutually reinforcing, whereas a weaker market, or one where there is strong competition, may require the artisan to make trade-offs in these areas if they are to remain viable, suggesting that “artisans may be more likely to pursue commercial success goals” than was previously expected (Treager, 2005, p. 12). While potentially indicating the levels of business acumen amongst artisan entrepreneurs to drive growth, circling back to the allowed use of the term artisan from a marketing perspective, it refocuses the conflict that may exist then between growth and subsequent impacts, either perceived or real, on the authenticity of the food product itself. This is of interest, as arguably absent from the literature is whether there are other factors that motivate or are of importance in terms of what drives the artisan food producer from a business perspective and is worthy of further research.

With entrepreneurship and innovation closely connected (Zhao, 2005), on the innovation front, it is of interest too, that the government, through its Rural Development Program, is focused on supporting both existing and new artisan, small and micro food and beverage producers through the €15 million LEADER Food Initiative funding program to help with not just innovation, but competitiveness and market development as well. The DAFM Minister, Charlie McConalogue, stated that “continued funding will be available to assist small food producers to develop new food offerings, new routes to sell their produce, and to support the rural economy at this critical time” acknowledging that “artisan and small food businesses have shown great innovation in adapting their operations to help connect with consumers in 2020” (Gov.ie, 2021, n.p.).

With a heightened focus on artisan food entrepreneurs by government and industry bodies to support local economies and meet the discerning needs of the growing consumer and visitor interest in local and artisan food, policymakers and the existing strategy frameworks and supports come under the spotlight, and further research is required to illuminate how the artisan food producers experience any benefits from this focus on the ground.

2.15 Food in Tourism in Ireland – Economics and Policy

Arguably it is economics that underpins Ireland's food tourism landscape. Tourism is a key lever for economic prosperity in Ireland, and within the food, tourism and food in tourism landscapes, as previously noted, there are numerous government strategies, frameworks and policies that serve to highlight the key value artisan producers can contribute to Ireland's foodscape and ultimately the economy. These range from agriculture (and its various linkages) (DAFM, 2010, 2015; DTTAS, 2019; Bord Bia, 2020; Teagasc, 2020) to increasingly food *in* tourism since 2008 (Fáilte Ireland, 2014; 2018; 2019)

To provide some context, in 2017 approximately 35% of tourist spend, equating to €2 billion, was spent on food with an ambition to grow that spend to €2.4 billion by 2023 (Fáilte Ireland, 2018), highlighting that food *in* tourism is of significant importance to Ireland's tourism proposition overall. Ireland's agri-food industry is also a key component in the country's economy, with plans to grow this sector by 85% to €19 billion by 2025 (DAFM, 2015) and arguably, artisan food producers are playing an increasing role in this sector. In 2016, research from Mintel estimated that artisan food sales would reach €706 million that year with an increase of 10% expected between 2016 and 2021 (Forde, 2016). Collaboration across these sectors is key, as in order to deliver a quality food tourism product to visitors, it must be underpinned by broader economic, food and agricultural policies rather than based solely on tourism policies alone (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000).

Artisan food producers have direct and indirect backward linkages to agriculture and/or horticulture, creating economic value (Richards, 2012), forward linkages to restaurants and cafés who can feature their products on menus, as well as having their product(s) for sale on site, in local shops and farmers' markets, which are themselves an attraction (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014), all generating a multiplier effect within communities and reducing leakages in the economy (Boyne and Hall, 2003; Hall and Mitchell, 2003). The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), in their development strategies, identify artisan producers as playing a key role in developing a sustainable agri-food economy as part of the value-added food and beverage sector in both the Irish and export markets, through supporting regional growth through both employment and wealth creation in the rural economy via the processing of Ireland's raw material supply, and the development of niche markets such as organics, as examples (DAFM, 2010).

This strategy also recognises a growing demand by consumers for specialty artisan products highlighting that artisan producers have the “potential to enrich Ireland’s tourism while, in turn, tourism can be a vehicle to enhance the image of Ireland and Irish food production internationally” (DAFM, 2010, p. 35), stating that “they have been highly effective ambassadors for Irish food culture abroad” (2010, p. 12). It is noteworthy that these government strategies aim to build on the existing success of entrepreneurial and innovative artisan producers, which indicates that they have achieved this success themselves outside of a formal development framework, and instead have been led by leveraging shifting consumer trends towards local and sustainable food (Feenstra, 2002; Hall, Mitchell and Sharples, 2003; Sage, 2010; Carroll, 2012). Interestingly, this shift aligns with the focus on generating higher tourist spend rather than on increasing tourist numbers (Fáilte Ireland, 2018), as niche and artisan foods and the environments where they are consumed, can attract a premium.

At a high level it is important to note that as well as driving tourism numbers and revenue growth through export earnings, promoting Ireland as a travel destination, including its food component, also underpins economic development in other areas, such as foreign direct investment into Ireland through tourism marketing (DTTAS, 2019). Tourism marketing highlights positive images of Ireland such as its “high quality natural environment, and friendly and welcoming people” (DTTAS, 2019, p.14), raising awareness levels and heightening the perception of Ireland abroad to a wider audience. Arguably it is in the pursuit of this broader economic aim that the government recognises the convergence of tourism with other economic activities, such as the food sector and food tourism amongst others, as opportunities to enhance Ireland’s brand and support this growth (DTTAS, 2019), dovetailing with Henderson’s (2009, p. 69) observation that “linkages between food and tourism are thus being forged in areas lacking a strong culinary identity, encouraged by authorities in pursuit of the economic rewards of food tourism, which is often viewed as a catalyst for rural development with a capacity to boost local agricultural production”.

This highlights that while certainly adding to the success of food tourism, and ultimately Ireland’s tourism proposition overall, artisan food producers are not the main focus of any food in tourism strategy specifically and therefore must navigate their role independently to be successful. This is of interest and further research is required to understand how these strategies along with government statements of support are experienced in the every-day by artisan food producers on the ground.

2.16 Conclusion:

The literature review focused on Ireland's current food in tourism landscape as it has evolved to the present day, contextualising the role of the artisan food producer within both the production and consumption of food in tourism, reviewing how they are classified from a business perspective on the one hand, giving due consideration to the economic and policy drivers that underpin the environment within which they operate, and as the providers of food and drink experiences on the other, often providing the environments that visitors experience it in, and their important links to culture, heritage and traditions.

While much is known about the value the role of the artisan food producer can bring to food in tourism from both a cultural and economic perspective theoretically, arguably absent from the literature is the voice of the artisan food producer themselves and how they experience this role in the Irish food in tourism landscape. The literature review has shown a gap in the research in a number of key areas. Firstly, from a business perspective it is important to establish if artisan food producers do in fact see that they play a role in food in tourism and if so to what extent? Considered in the literature as entrepreneurs motivated by lifestyle choices affecting their commercial success, it is of interest to understand then if there are any other factors that motivate them, which could arguably impact both the economic and cultural aspects of their role. Secondly, there is an opportunity to develop an understanding of how, on the ground, artisan food producers experience the various strategies, frameworks and supports designed by policymakers to enhance Ireland's food in tourism experience, which arguably underpins a broader economic aim, and their effectiveness. And thirdly, understanding the importance of providing great food in tourism experiences to visitors, how do artisan producers consider and engender them? And when we consider their important links to culture, heritage and traditions, particularly as visitors' expectations are on the rise, does providing these experiences result in any conflicts, such as 'third space' pressures, from a business operations perspective?

The aim of the forthcoming research is to add the artisan producers' voice to the literature, augmenting the existing knowledge, by filling the gaps identified in the review. This new knowledge can serve to further inform stakeholders in terms of future food in tourism developments and chapter 3 will outline and discuss the methodology approach taken for the primary research conducted.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

A comprehensive review of the existing literature on the topic of food tourism, both globally and from an Irish perspective, was conducted as the first step of the research. A desk-based examination of books, book chapters and peer reviewed journal articles was undertaken to review the existing literature covering the overall field of food and tourism along with an online review of the existing grey literature, which included multiple government departments and agencies' strategy documents, policies, frameworks and initiatives, as well as various industry publications and research.

As evidenced in the literature review, there is an abundance of academic research, which considers food tourism through the wide lenses of destination marketing, management and attraction (du Rand and Heath, 2008; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015), tourist motivations and experiences (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Bessière, 1998), policies (Quigley et al., 2019), economics and economic development (Che, 2006; Hall and Mitchell, 2003; Henderson, 2009), and of course the food tourism providers themselves (Richards, 2002), amongst others. In addition, the grey literature outlines Ireland's food in tourism strategy, and mainly stems from Ireland's tourism agency, Fáilte Ireland (2014, 2018, 2019), as well as the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine's (DAFM) strategy document *Food Wise* (2015), which discusses the underpinning importance of food, in tourism, outlining opportunities for the convergence of both the agrifood and tourism sectors.

On close examination of both the academic and grey literature, it is possible to identify a gap in the research, specifically in relation to artisan food producers, and the question of how they experience their role within food in tourism in Ireland? Considering the key role that artisan food producers arguably play in connecting visitors to multi-type food experiences, now in increasing demand within tourism, and the value of food in tourism to the economy, it is important that as a stakeholder they are represented in the literature, from both a knowledge and experience perspective. The aim of this research, therefore, is to add the artisan food producers' voice to the literature, utilising a phenomenological paradigm, highlighting the lived experience of the respondents. Considering this aim, an interpretivist paradigm was chosen, using a constructionist ontology, an interpretivist (phenomenological) epistemology and a qualitative methodology to achieve the objectives of this study, as it helps the researcher to get close to the 'lived experience' and the professional life of the artisan food

producer(s), to understand how they perceive and experience the phenomenon of food tourism (Gill, 2014).

3.2 Phenomenology:

In tourism studies interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology has been utilised as a theoretical approach to “describing or understanding the experiential and lived existence” (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010, p. 1056) of stakeholders who participate in tourism. It looks at experience from the “perspective of meanings, understanding and interpretations” (Ibid) and Pernecky and Jamal (2010, p. 1071) posit that the “information that emerges as the result of adopting hermeneutic phenomenology can be valuable to different stakeholders (e.g., marketers, service providers, business owners, and planners) but also to academia”, as arguably sharing knowledge across all stakeholders promotes understanding, prompts communication, and can facilitate learning and development opportunities. Using a phenomenological approach provides an opportunity for artisan food producers to share knowledge of their day-to-day role within food in tourism. This can serve to illuminate the cultural and economic space within which they operate, and the intellectual capital gained through the lens of their lived experience can arguably inform opportunities to enhance or develop future policies and practices to underpin Ireland’s food in tourism success for the longer term.

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research which focuses on the commonalities (Creswell, 2012; Smith, 2003), as well as the distinctions (Given, 2008) of a lived experience within a particular group and is considered from a first-person point of view. Phenomenology draws mainly from the works of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger and is a family of qualitative research methodologies as well as a philosophical movement (Gill, 2014). It refers to the “study of phenomena, where a phenomenon is anything that appears to someone in their conscious experience” (Moran, 2000, cited in Gill, 2014, p. 118) and is divided into two main forms – Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology and Heidegger’s interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology (Gill, 2014).

3.3 Descriptive phenomenology:

Descriptive phenomenology aims to describe the essence of experiences, which refers to the “a priori, essential structures of subjective experiences” (Gill, 2014, p.120), using reduction methods such as transcendental reduction, where the researcher needs to suspend any assumptions they may have about a phenomenon, also known as bracketing (Gill, 2014).

Husserl (2012) believes that this disconnection or transcension from daily life provides a viewpoint “upon transcendently purified phenomena” (in Gill, 2014, p. 120), where purified is taken to mean “free from every-day assumptions” (Ibid). Husserl (2012) states that phenomenology is “a science which aims exclusively at establishing ‘knowledge of essences’” (in Gill, 2014, p. 120) and all phenomenological methodologies based on this share the aim of describing these essences (Ibid).

3.4 Interpretative phenomenology:

Jamal and Hill (2002, p. 1067) suggest that interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology, which is the approach taken for this research, “offers rich possibilities for addressing the being-in-the-world of tourism as a tourist, a resident, a governmental official, an enterprise owner, a destination manager or other being in relationship with the objects and things in the local-global tourism system”. In interpretative phenomenology, Heidegger focuses on the role of interpretation, stating that the “self and world belong together in the single entity, *Dasein*” (Heidegger, 1998, cited in Gill, 2014, p. 120), meaning that interpretation is an integral part of the research. Heidegger believes that we can never be free of assumptions and his interpretative approach therefore denies the possibility of fully detached reflection and as such disputes Husserl’s concept of bracketing (Gill, 2014).

Interpretive phenomenology considers people as being sentient and social and situated within the world they live in, a world which consists of “common meanings, habits, practices, meanings and skills that are socially prior to the individual and are socially disclosed or encountered” (Given, 2008, p. 462), which accounts for the fact that people are products of their upbringing, background and previous experiences, so will therefore most likely experience the same phenomenon differently. It therefore relies on “disclosive practices that allow social practices, embodied intentionality, common taken-for-granted background meanings, habits, rituals, practices, and everyday life to show up (i.e., become visible and intelligible)” (Ibid), which makes this approach germane in capturing the artisan food producers’ lived experiences with Given (2008, p. 462) positing that “once an aspect of our experience is articulated, given language, and given public expression, we have a different access to it”, offering an opportunity to capture knowledge from the perspective of the artisan food producer that is outside of the existing literature today.

3.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA):

Of the five types of phenomenological methodologies, the one that is most compatible with this research aim is Jonathan Smith's interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which sits in Heidegger's interpretative phenomenology, and has a central aim of exploring "in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world" (Gill, 2014, p. 122). IPA utilises flexible guidelines and its idiographic nature differentiates it from other phenomenological methodologies (Gill, 2014). It is focused on "the detailed examination of human lived experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 34) with the aim of allowing the experience to be "expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems" (Ibid). In IPA, analysis will always involve interpretation along with what Smith and Osborn (2003) call the double hermeneutic, which accounts for the fact that "the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of x " (Smith et al., 2009, p. 37). Smith et al. (Ibid) posit that successful IPA research combines both an empathetic and questioning approach as the researcher attempts "to understand, both in the sense of 'trying to see what it is like for someone' and in the sense of 'analysing, illuminating, and making sense of something'". The main value in an IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events and states hold for participants (Smith et al., 2009), which is integral to understanding the lived experiences of artisan producers in their food in tourism role. Arguably then what makes IPA an appropriate approach for this research is that it covers all aspects of the lived experience, which includes the subject's motivations, feelings, belief systems, wishes and desires and how these appear, or not, in behaviours and actions (Eatough and Smith, 2017), allowing for a richly detailed account of the artisan food producers' lived experience within the food in tourism landscape to emerge.

3.6 Purposive sampling:

In order to align with IPA's orientation, purposive sampling, a nonprobability approach, was taken (Smith et al., 2009). This is a non-random technique which involves deliberately choosing participants based on their ability to provide the information the researcher seeks, based on their experience and knowledge (Etikan et al., 2016). It requires selecting individuals that are "proficient and well informed [on the] phenomenon of interest" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2), and importantly who are expressly interested in participating when approached, as the idea behind purposive sampling "is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will be better able to assist with the relevant research" (Etikan

et al., 2016, p. 3). Unlike random sampling, which is a deliberate inclusion of a “diverse cross section of ages, backgrounds and cultures” (Ibid), purposive sampling allows the researcher to concentrate on those who are best suited to help with the research project undertaken. In order to consider the research subject from many available angles and to ensure variation within the sample group, a heterogeneous approach was taken (Etikan et al., 2016), which led to the inclusion of a selection of artisan food producers producing various food and drink stuffs in various locations across the island of Ireland.

3.7 Data collection:

Data was collected via virtual face-to-face meetings, in light of the current covid-19 pandemic, through the use of semi-structured interviews, with a total of ten artisan food producers in March 2021 (see Appendix L). An email was sent to prospective interviewees, outlining the background and aims of the research and inviting them to participate. While accepting that some of the limitations of purposive sampling in selecting the participants are subjectivity and bias on the part of the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016), to minimise this somewhat, sixteen artisan producers were contacted and the first ten to respond were those who were subsequently included. Each of the interviewees were owner-operators of their businesses – four were sole owner-operators, five were family businesses and one was owned and operated in conjunction with a formal business partner.

3.8 Research interview:

Considering the aim of the research, interviewing participants is considered a good method when the researcher “wants to learn about the experience and perceptions” of the interviewee and capture their “thoughts and experiences in their own words” (Gard McGehee, 2012, p. 365). Considering that “on the supply- side, tourism industry stakeholders are often very busy people, but they also tend to be immersed and involved in their work, and as such are eager to share their thoughts” (Gard McGehee, 2012, p. 366), a semi-structured interview approach was taken. Smith et al. (2009, p.62) posits that “used effectively, and sensitively, semi-structured interviews can facilitate rapport and empathy, and permit great flexibility of coverage. As a result, they do tend to produce rich and interesting data”.

The researcher constructed a flexible interview schedule containing a topic-based guide for the interviews, including additional prompts, which aimed to answer the research objectives, while allowing room for additional information to emerge (Smith et al. 2009). Each interview was recorded, and any notes taken were appended to the interview transcripts for

consideration at the data analysis stage. The longest interview was 1 hour and 59 minutes long, while the shortest interview lasted for 1 hour and 3 minutes. Each of the interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim, using a transcription tool called *Otter*, and these were checked against the recordings and edited for accuracy and readability. In addition, each participant was asked to sign a consent form, allowing for the use of the qualitative data collected in the research findings.

3.9 Thematic Analysis:

The rich data collected was analysed using a qualitative inductive thematic analysis as a method to identify, analyse and report on themes within it, which involved “the searching across a data set - be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts - to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.15).

To conduct thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 15) outline a six-step process that begins with the researcher looking for “patterns of meaning and issue of potential interest in the data” and ends with “the reporting of the content and meaning of patterns (themes) in the data”, emphasising that the analysis it is not a linear process but instead “involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing” (Ibid).

3.9.1 Step 1 – Data Familiarisation:

This involved a process of immersion in the data, through listening back to the recorded interviews, transcribing them verbatim and taking notes on the main topics discussed. Each transcribed interview, along with the notes taken, were then actively re-read in order to become familiar with the depth and breadth of the content, allowing for ideas and patterns to start to emerge and take shape. It was at this early stage that meanings became apparent, echoing Bird (2005) who posits that the transcription process itself should be seen as “a key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology” (in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 17).

3.9.2 Step 2 – Generating Initial Codes:

The next step involved creating an initial long list of topics about what was interesting in the data and codes were assigned manually based on the content of the entire data set, where some early themes began to emerge. These were highlighted using coloured pens and the data

extracts bracketed off to avoid any loss of context, as many of the interviewee narratives were quite long.

3.9.3 Step 3 – Searching for Themes:

From this long list of codes, a number of broad potential themes were identified, and the coded comments were organised under each of these themes with some becoming sub-themes. It was at this point that a number of codes emerged outside of the early key themes and were categorised under miscellaneous. Also, at this point a comprehensive overview of the key themes and sub-themes that were appearing emerged, allowing for further consideration and refinement.

3.9.4 Step 4 - Reviewing Themes:

On review of the themes identified, the data was then further refined a number of times, leading to some themes being merged and a couple being discarded, while ensuring that the data within each theme was cohesive and each theme was distinguishable, using steps as outlined in the literature (Gill, 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This gave a substantive view of the various themes and how they fit together highlighting “the overall story they [told] about the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 21).

3.9.5 Step 5 - Defining and Naming Themes:

The data extracts within the themes were then re-read to ensure the themes adequately captured the codes, before reviewing the overall data to ensure that the themes were representative and supported an explanation of the phenomenon. The outcome of this analytical process is a narrative account where “the researcher’s analytic interpretation is presented in detail and is supported with verbatim extracts from participants” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 4).

3.9.6 Step 6 - Producing the Findings:

The last stage involves the final analysis and write up of the findings, which will be covered in chapter 4.

3.10 Ethical Considerations:

From an ethical perspective, it was important that the researcher conducted the research to a high standard. A consent form was sent to each participant prior to the interview, with a request that it be signed only after it had been jointly reviewed, providing then that they were

happy to do so. It was also made clear to each participant that it is possible to withdraw from the research study at any time should they choose, up to the submission date. Each participant was also informed that the interview is to be recorded for the purposes of analysis and post-interview will be transcribed and appended to the final dissertation.

The ethics code that the researcher will follow is mandated by the Technological University Dublin's (T.U.) research ethics committee, which states that it is "guided in its work by commonly agreed standards of good practice including the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the IUA Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland" (Technological University Dublin, 2020). While the researcher does not believe that there are any ethical concerns in terms of the research topic, should any be raised by the participants, it will be addressed accordingly, based on the premise which Smith et al. (2009, p. 53) outline as "avoidance of harm".

3.11 Interview Pilot Test:

In order to ensure that the interview schedule was effective and the data output therefore useful, the first interview was also used as a pilot, as Smith et al. (2009) suggests that finalising the interview schedule is an iterative process. The pilot also provided a good opportunity to reiterate the purpose of the interview, as it related to the research being undertaken, to ensure that it was clear to the interviewee. It also provided an opportunity to jointly review the consent form to ensure the interviewee was clear on what it covered and what signing it allowed for, which is considered as good practice (Ibid).

Based on the first interview, a couple of sub-topics were removed from the schedule, while additional probing questions were added. It was also an opportunity to become familiar with the high-level topic questions, with a view to ensuring they did not illicit any confusion, enabling the conversation to flow. On reflection it also highlighted how the semi-structured style of the interview could be used flexibly, based on the interviewee's participation and the areas they wanted to cover as an active stakeholder in the conversation (Ibid), in order to promote the flow of rich data that using IPA allows for.

3.12 Research Limitations:

It is important to note that this research was conducted during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, meaning that the participants' lived experience on both a business and personal level was influenced by a range of impacts caused by various public health lockdowns.

Lockdowns restricted both peoples' movement and businesses' capacity to operate normally and required many food producers to pivot their business models, as people adjusted their consumption habits, to fit this changing environment. Of interest is consumer research published by Bord Bia (2020) on the future of food post-Covid, which suggests that many of these recent changes are likely to remain in place, and this conceivably had the potential to inform both opportunities and challenges for the artisan food producer once travel resumes again, and the expectation is that these events will be reflected in the research data.

While every effort was made to ensure the research sample group was reasonably representative of the island of Ireland and included a variety of artisan produced foodstuffs, in order to capture a meaningful view of how artisan producers experience their role in food in tourism in Ireland, the sample is not a catch-all and arguably there are experiences that will be excluded from the research findings. It is also likely that by their very nature, individual lived experiences even in similar circumstances, will vary (Given, 2008).

One criticism of IPA is whether it can “accurately capture the experiences and meaning of experiences rather than opinions of it” (Tuffour, 2017, p. 4) based on an assertion that both the researcher and participant must have the necessary communication skills, suggesting that the interviewer must pay particular attention to drawing out “rich and exhaustive data from participants” (Ibid). With this in mind, the researcher adopted a semi-structured interview approach promoting empathy and rapport, as Smith et al. (2009, p.62) consider that this “tend[s] to produce rich and interesting data”, to offset this concern.

Once the data was captured, themes were used as a way to articulate these experiences at a high level, which arguably lends a certain level of consistency to the findings, offering a starting point to further explore themes as they emerge, should they be of interest to future researchers.

3.13 Conclusion:

This chapter outlined the philosophical underpinnings that the research project adopts, from the paradigm of phenomenology, which is both a family of qualitative research methodologies as well as a philosophical movement (Gill, 2014). It discussed the key differences between descriptive and interpretative phenomenology with a focus on IPA, the methodology chosen as being best suited to the study's research aims, as it allows for the “detailed examination of the human lived experience...expressed in its own terms” (Smith et al. 2009) in order to answer the research questions posed in chapter one. Also discussed was

the approach to the secondary data research which sets the context for the primary research that follows. A qualitative methods approach was applied, and a semi-structured interview style was used for data collection in order to produce “rich and interesting data” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 62), which is integral to this type of research study. Once collected, the six-step thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied to the data and the findings are discussed in detail in chapter 4.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings and Discussion

4.0 Chapter 4 – Research Findings and Discussion:

4.1 Introduction:

The aim of the research was to understand the phenomenon of the artisan food producers' role in food in tourism in Ireland and using a phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to analyse it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. The main research question underpinning the research study was as follows: What are the lived experiences of artisan producers in their role as food tourism providers in food tourism in Ireland?

To answer this question the artisan food producers who participated were asked to share their experiences through semi-structured interviews to avoid delimiting their responses, and nothing they shared could be interpreted as right or wrong, but rather a subjective account of their experience as they had lived it. The findings address the main objectives of this research as outlined in chapter one and in conjunction with the literature review answer the questions: What is food tourism? and What is food in tourism in Ireland?

The output of the interviews conducted provided rich narratives containing a depth of insight into how artisan food producers experience their role in food in tourism not available in the literature, including, but not limited to, their intrinsic motivations and what is important to them in terms of their *raison d'être*, their perspective on tourism experiences and the reality as it translates on the ground, the challenges they encounter engaging with various government departments and agencies designed to support food in tourism on the ground and the realities of being businesses that have both economic, as well as cultural, expectations and demands placed on them.

A number of themes and sub-themes were identified in the data, and they are presented here in a way that is intended to link them meaningfully. However, it is important to note that there are crossovers within the majority of topics discussed, as none stand in isolation, and arguably this is reflective of allowing the lived experience of those interviewed to be “expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems” (Smith et al., p. 34), which is central to the integrity of the research. Considering this, topics have been linked where relevant, with the aim of avoiding any unnecessary duplication, and what follows is a presentation and discussion of these findings.

4.2 Overview of Findings:

The findings produced four superordinate themes that will provide structure to the discussion and are outlined here.

The first provides a more detailed and nuanced view of the lived experience of the artisan food producer, from both a business and personal perspective and how they invariably intersect, which aims to answer the research question - who are the artisan food producers and how do they perceive their role in food in tourism? From a business perspective four main themes are reviewed, centred on the artisan food producer's primary business focus, what role they play in food in tourism, while also considering them through the lens of both entrepreneurship and innovation. While from a personal perspective what emerges are the artisan food producers' main motivations based on their values and what they subjectively view as important, and are presented under the themes of passion, heritage, education and sustainability.

The second superordinate theme focuses on the artisan food producers' operating environment and how they engage with policymakers, which aims to answer the research question – how affectively do existing government strategies and agencies support artisan food producers in a food in tourism role? This has been broken out into five main themes which considers the experiences of artisan food producers in the context of competing with 'big business', the challenges, conflicts and issues arising from dealing with government departments and agencies, the impacts of falling outside business norms, grant and investment challenges, and how these conspire to put forward a topic focused on the risk of loss involving the artisan food producer, and the concerns this raises.

The third superordinate theme is the importance of the food in tourism experience and aims to answer the question – how important is the visitor experience to the artisan food producer? It is broken out into seven main themes which cover the artisan food producers' role in providing the experience, the experience itself, balancing food tourism with production, agritourism, the concept of 3rd spaces, the use of food stories and narratives and what artisan producers view as the untapped potential of Ireland as a food destination, based on their lived experience in the everyday.

Lastly, the final superordinate theme is classified as 'against the grain', focusing on three emerging themes that are absent from the existing food in tourism literature, which consider

the experiences of the artisan food producer in terms of sexism, being in the role of an ‘outsider’ and the contentious topic of food fraud.

4.3 Theme 1 - Who is the Artisan Food Producer? An In-depth View:

4.3.1 On a Business Level:

As the role of the artisan food producer arguably sits within both the production and consumption of food in tourism, they connect with multiple stakeholders ranging from, but not limited to, government departments and destination marketing organisations, local and global food networks, other food in tourism providers such as hospitality and restaurants, and of course with tourists themselves, all within an evolving food in tourism landscape.

As producers, from an economic standpoint, their businesses need to be viable to be successful, which requires them not only to produce quality food stuffs, but also in parallel, to exercise a certain level of business acumen in order to develop a route to market, as Brett (Wicklow Way Wines) commented, “what we realised over time was you know, you can make product all day, but you have to sell it”, which was echoed by more than one producer, illustrating that just producing a great product in itself is not enough to ensure success.

Once produced, it is then the visitor’s consumption of their food that connects the artisan food producer to food in tourism. However, conceivably it is not just the consumption of the food itself that connects them - it is also the role they play in how visitors, through what Urry (1995) terms the ‘tourist gaze’, experience the consumption of place, spaces (including production) and people, through their food, either directly or indirectly, that inextricably connects them to food in tourism, as illustrated by Bessiere and Tibere (2013, p. 3525) who posit that “the consumption of local specialities is a symbolic consumption of a land, region, province, of its soil and a symbolic link with its population”.

So then, how do artisan food producers view their business through the lens of food in tourism?

4.3.1.1 Primary Business Focus:

Before the artisan food producer can play a role in food tourism, they need to firstly produce their product. The research shows that the primary role of the artisan food producer, from a business perspective, is the core production of their product(s) for purposes of sale, while their food in tourism role is secondary, with this secondary role varying in terms of scope and

maturity depending on the individual producer, although feasibly there are excellent opportunities to augment their sales via food in tourism, as souvenirs for example (Richards, 2002), if they diversify. When we consider, as previously outlined, in the field of food tourism management, food tourism is a business (Getz et al., 2014), this makes sense, as from an economic perspective the business needs to be viable to be successful and success invariably starts with their product. Arguably however, the reality of that on the ground means that artisan food producers do not set up, nor run a business, with the primary intention of playing a food in tourism role but when they do diversify, the research shows that it needs to make sense, not just from an economic perspective, but that it must also align on a personal level as well.

Siobháin (St. Tola) exemplified this, stating, “we have set days and set times that the tours can happen...because we’re mainly farming and production, so we had to be able to run our core business”. This was also echoed by Eavaun (Killenure Dexter Beef) who had decided, “if I’m going to make this sustainable, I’m going to have to run it as a commercial entity, so it’s got to be sales, sales, sales”.

Another angle identified was the retracting from a tourism role because of production health and safety requirements, with John M. (Ballyminane Mills) stating, “I [did] tours up to about a year and a half ago and I’m after deciding not to go down [the] route, of tours. Reason being, the mill being nearly two hundred years old...everything is open, it’s a working mill [and] when everything is open, someone could have a sticky finger, put it that way. And for me to get it up to that standard for tourism, I had Fáilte Ireland out...there’s a lot of money to be spent. And I’m not willing to do it basically”, thereby making production his primary focus as it is this which ultimately sustains his business.

Others, like Liam (St. Mel’s Brewery) stated, “I would have started a brewery in Longford anyway, whether there was tourism or not, I was always going to do that”. However, now they are considering options to add value to their core business through tourism opportunities with Liam stating, “we did a lot of work in the last twelve months, on our brand, on our website, and how we align ourselves with food. We haven’t approached Tourism Ireland yet...we haven’t gotten into that. But what we have done is we’ve opened a brewery shop here at the brewery...and the idea then is to market that brewery shop, through tourism channels, as a stop off point [and] maybe or maybe not do tours, we’re not sure yet”. As a start-up, Brett (Wicklow Way Wines) too advised that the initial focus for his business was

setting up the facilities to make and then subsequently sell the wine, starting at Bord Bia's Bloom Festival, acknowledging that their foray into food in tourism came afterwards, stating, "it was kind of after, [although] it was a natural development of how we do [business]", indicating that his product lent itself well to a move into food in tourism, echoing Fraser and Alonso (2006, p. 19), who posit that "the tourism and wine industries are increasingly identified as natural symbiotic partners".

Recognising that artisan food producers are viewed as important stakeholders, integral to Ireland's food in tourism offering, as well as a valuable asset in the promotion of 'brand Ireland' through food tourism imagery in various marketing campaigns (DAFM, 2010, 2015; DTTAS, 2019; Bord Bia, 2020; Teagasc, 2020; Fáilte Ireland, 2014; 2018; 2019), understanding then that production is their primary focus is of significant interest here, as conceivably it has the ability to limit the food tourism product on offer in two ways. The first is in terms of the overall availability and quality of the food in tourism experiences themselves, and the second is in terms of whether there is motivation for the artisan food producers to play a direct role at all. So, in view of not just their economic contribution to food in tourism, but also their contribution as providers of the type of sensory and enjoyable food in tourism experiences visitors are looking for (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982), it is important that policymakers are closely connected to artisan food producers in order to understand their key motivations and business objectives, enabling them to create an environment within which they can survive and thrive, from a food in tourism perspective.

And while there certainly have been working groups comprising various stakeholders set up in the past, one of which was Fáilte Ireland's food champion group, to input into Ireland's food tourism strategy, it is not a regular, ongoing process, highlighting a disconnect. Confirming that when it comes to having a voice at the table, Siobhain (St. Tola), who was one of Fáilte Ireland's original food champions, stated, "I think there is much more possibility [to input] and there's nothing like talking to people on the ground and to bring them in to talk to the different agencies to see from their perspective where they think we should go. I mean, it should be happening [even] now if they're hoping [to get] tourism back on its feet". Of interest too, is that the food champions network is now a stand-alone entity, no longer connected to Fáilte Ireland, and operates as a paid consultancy service.

What is required then is a level of on-going consultation and dialogue to reconnect both the tourism agencies and artisan food producers on the ground, in order to plan for, and proactively provide the necessary supports, to embed them in a successful long-term food in tourism strategy, by including them as a key stakeholder, as arguably this is not the typical approach currently and is a topic mainly absent from current literature.

4.3.1.2 Do Artisan Food Producers Play a Role in Food in Tourism?

With the primary focus of artisan food producers' businesses classified as food production, it is important to link back to Wolf (2004), who suggested that some businesses just "might not see themselves as part of the tourism industry" (Henderson, 2004, p. 70), to review from their perspective, whether in their everyday experience, they do in fact see themselves as playing a role in food in tourism. The strategies that have emerged from the convergence of the agrifood and tourism sectors, as well as within food tourism itself, articulate that the artisan food producer plays an important role in Ireland's food tourism landscape, and arguably for these strategies to be successful it requires a level of awareness and active participation by the artisan producers themselves.

It is of interest then that this research found a mixed response from artisan food producers in terms of their general awareness of being involved in food tourism and also to the perceived extent of that involvement. Two of them initially did not specifically think they played a role in food tourism at all, despite the fact that their food appeared on the menus of both local and well-known restaurants, at various festivals, as well as being featured by celebrity chefs involved in promotional segments at events, and in videos for Ireland's experience brands through Fáilte Ireland. For John W. (Dooncastle Oysters), it was due mainly to a necessary focus on getting the business off the ground, with him stating, "No, I'm not tuned into it. I don't know, I suppose with the oysters, it was such a hard industry to get into when I was starting off, I buried myself in work. And I let all them things pass me by", while Marita (Drummond House), who doesn't have a specific on-site tourist activity stated, "Ah no, I don't do food tours, I'm not in food tourism", suggesting quite a literal view of what is required to consider oneself as playing a role in food in tourism.

Contrastingly, Siobhán (St. Tola) had a keen awareness from the early stages of taking over her business, even prior to dealing with tourists directly, that she was indirectly involved in food tourism stating, "I took over the business 21 years ago and at that stage St. Tola cheese was mainly being sold to the food service sector and the food service sector is very dependent

on tourism, as we now see, so I suppose my business has always had a certain reliance on tourists, whether they be local, national, or international tourists... tourism has always been at the end, the end customer for St. Tola's, when you look at it from a very broad perspective", indicating a level of business savvy that arguably has helped her to build a business that has achieved success over the long-term.

Similarly, Liam (St. Mel's Brewery), based in the midlands, understands that he is involved in food tourism despite the fact that he doesn't have an on-site tourism product specifically, recognising that tourists are driving a demand for local products which has led to his product range being stocked by numerous bars and restaurants on the tourist trail, stating "we are part of what Ireland can sell abroad" adding, "you get more support from tourism, for local products, in a lot of cases than you do from local, when they're out eating and drinking", highlighting, "we get support from local pubs and restaurants because they understand the need to have authentic and quality products for visitors", which links back to the revalorising of local, enforcing the premise that visitors are indeed searching for local and authentic experiences through food as outlined in the literature (Ibery and Kneafsey, 1999; Sims, 2009), and therefore arguably raises the importance of ensuring that artisan food producers can provide it, so tourists can encounter it.

When asked if she played a role in food in tourism specifically, Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) was positive that she did, stating, "We do. We're on the tourism maps [and] when we open to the public [again], people will definitely be coming here...they used to come for the art shows and then very quickly, after we got on the TV, people were only coming here for the Dexter story...from all over the world. So yes, I would say that we're definitely part of food tourism. Definitely", adding, "Only because I've done it myself, not that anyone has actually come and helped me, you know?" And this is of interest because it is another example of the disconnect identified previously, where both the agrifood and tourism agencies need the artisan food producers to provide the experiences that are being marketed as part of 'brand Ireland' but are not always including them as stakeholders from a dialogue and planning perspective, or indeed providing the right supports, arguably. In line with the existing literature, Eavaun's experience also serves to prove that artisan food producers have achieved much of their food in tourism success themselves, outside of a formal development framework, as government strategies are such that they are building on the existing success of entrepreneurial and innovative artisan food producers rather than developing them from scratch (DAFM, 2015).

Interestingly, the interviews themselves prompted a couple of artisan producers to think about the role they potentially played, or could play in food in tourism, as feasibly it gave them the time to focus on the topic more specifically through the course of the interview conversation. This led Marita (Drummond House) to add, “I think there are areas [that] actually haven’t been tapped into [yet], as we’re discussing it, like a lightbulb moment, it’s so bloody obvious now”, while Liam (St. Mel’s Brewery), at the end of his interview, in response to a request for any last comments on his role in food in tourism, stated, “I enjoyed that. I don’t think I’ve been giving it enough thought, so it was nice to talk about it for a while”.

March and Wilkinson (2008, p. 455) suggests that any successful tourism destination “depends in important ways on how the organisational parts are interconnected, the way they act and interact and the relations between the actors involved”. Considering Fáilte Ireland (2018, p. 5) is already three years into their current strategy, and with their food in tourism proposition relying on “increasing the number of businesses engaged with creating an ‘Irish food movement’”, these findings plausibly raise a number of red flags. The first is how Fáilte Ireland is currently engaging with artisan food producers to bring them on their food in tourism journey, especially when two artisans did not see themselves as having a role in food in tourism in the first place, which arguably is of particular concern when you consider that there are so many facets to what a role in food in tourism includes outside of just an on-site visitor activity, indicating a possible gap in their approach. The second is the lack of dialogue and input mechanisms in place, as discussed earlier in the chapter, in order to build relationships and promote better engagement across a range of topics, and lastly, the insight that artisan food producers believe that they ‘have to do it themselves’, based on their experience, indicating either a lack of supports available, or at the very least, a lack of awareness of such supports, from a government agency perspective, raising a question as to the effectiveness then of communication efforts.

Currently not captured in the literature, this knowledge is of interest to those policymakers involved in food tourism development, as it can serve to inform planning. However, arguably further research is required to understand the level of challenge involved, in order for Fáilte Ireland to better pursue their aim of creating an ‘Irish food movement’ on the ground and ensuring artisan food producers are included on that journey as valued stakeholders who contribute their voice from the ground.

4.3.1.3 Artisan Food Producers as Entrepreneurs:

As a business, arguably, much of what is known about the artisan food producer to date in terms of their motivations and their business values and ambitions, can be found in the academic literature that considers them through the lens of entrepreneurship (Tregear, 2005). Here they are viewed as community-based lifestyle seekers, where a combination of the work/life balance they are striving for and how business oriented they are, determines their level of success or failure (Tregear, 2005), where the bar for measuring this success is commercial growth.

The research already shows that the primary focus of an artisan food producer is production and sales. Building from there, the research also shows that while many were happy to identify themselves as artisan entrepreneurs, their motivations were skewed towards commercial success rather than lifestyle choice, dovetailing with existing literature that suggests that artisan food producers may be more commercially focused than was originally thought (Tregear, 2005).

This is echoed by Jane (Harnett's oils) who stated, "I think as an artisan you have to be [an entrepreneur], even if you don't start out that way, you're definitely going to end up that way...but the fact that every bottle, you're hand labelling, you're doing something with it, when you go to sell it, you want to sell it at the best [price] you can, but to do that you have to be an entrepreneur, you have to know how to do social media, you need to know how to market your product, you need to know how to sell it, what price to sell it, so, in turn, you're making yourself into an entrepreneur to be able to do that".

Of interest though, is that none of those who categorised themselves as entrepreneurs identified as being in the lifestyle seeker category (Tregear, 2005), nor did it emerge as a topic that was salient to them in terms of what motivates and/or is important to them regarding their business ambitions.

From a lifestyle perspective, Sally (Woodcock Smokery), irately recalled an experience from her past, stating "I remember years ago, [a former senior executive at Bord Bia] saying at some meeting that the artisan producers were, what did he call us? 'Life stylers', which really got my goat. Because we're very fortunate, we do live in remote rural locations", suggesting that location was seen as an indicator of lifestyle choice without due consideration of the work involved.

And while Liam (St. Mel's Brewery) considers himself as an entrepreneur, he does not make a connection to it being a lifestyle choice, stating, "a lot of breweries that opened up around the same time as us, a lot of them aren't here anymore, because I think they came into it with slightly the wrong attitude [as in] this is going to be easy, that we're choosing a lifestyle and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, you're not choosing a lifestyle, you know...I was talking about this just this morning with the lady who does our marketing, [and] we kind of market a lifestyle for ourselves, but you know, the reality is very different to that, it's not all standing around drinking beer and having the craic, unfortunately".

After highlighting the importance of knowing margins and business costs, Marita stated, "[being an] entrepreneur is about business. Food is business. I'm in business to run my businesses efficiently, to give myself a quality [standard] of life, to sustain my business so that I can keep doing what I like to do. Just because I love doing it doesn't mean I have to forget the facts and figures and innovation. You do need to keep innovating".

And this is of interest, because it highlights that just because an artisan producer may enjoy what they do, or because they may do it in a great location, does not negate either the business knowledge, nor the hard work required, as is the case with any business, to make it successful, and therefore sustainable, for the long-term. In fact, it could be argued that by focusing on the perceived 'nicer' elements of being an artisan food producer, viewing them through a 'romantic' lens, or considering them as lifestyle seekers (Tregear, 2015), places them at odds with reality and conceivably risks them being pigeonholed as less important stakeholders in food tourism, making their role more difficult when compared say to bigger, more commercial players, in the food in tourism environment. It also highlights the fact that as per Liam (St. Mel's Brewery), clever marketing can potentially create the illusion of a 'lifestyle' business, which is portraying an image that is not necessarily reflective of the reality.

Fernández-Armesto (2002, p. 222-223) suggests that in our post-industrial society "an artisanal reaction is already underway" as consumers react to globalisation and homogeneity suggesting that "in prosperous markets, the emphasis is shifting from cheapness to quality, rarity and esteem for artisanal methods", indicating that the future will look much more like the past than was perhaps predicted. Plausibly, this highlights that there is a growing role for artisan producers to play in food and subsequently food in tourism, accelerated by consumers' shift to local artisan food (Sage, 2010), and an interest in shorter food supply

chains driven by the pandemic (Cappelli and Cini, 2020). From start-ups to existing businesses expanding or diversifying, this topic is deserving of further research, which could help pave the way for this growth, building on Hjalager and Corigliano's (2000) proposal that in order to have a quality food tourism product for visitors, it is necessary that it is underpinned by broader economic, food and agricultural policies rather than based solely on tourism policies alone.

4.3.1.4 The Innovation Link:

While the research shows that lifestyle motivations are not a key focus for those artisan food producers who consider themselves entrepreneurs, it did clearly highlight that closely connected to their entrepreneurship, was innovation.

When it comes to entrepreneurship and innovation, Zhao (2005, p. 25) argues that the “combination of the two is vital to organisational success in today's dynamic and changing environment...and are not [just] confined to the initial stages of a new venture”. This was strongly echoed in the research which shows that the majority of artisan food producers had innovation at the centre of their business, with significant plans for the future in terms of both products, services and experiences, and notably all self-driven.

To help put this into context, some examples, though not exhaustive, are: creamed honey and caramelised garlic from Drummond House; a new berry wine from Wicklow Way Wines, along with an intention to develop a ‘centre for creation’ involving an organic market garden, and facilities for visitors to work with metal and clay, suggesting a clear link between food tourism and creative tourism (Richards, 2012; OECD, 2014); a mobile oyster market from Dooncastle Oysters with plans to have their oyster van travel to various caravan parks in Galway so that visitors can buy directly while on holidays (driven by the pandemic); glamping from Ballyminane Mills to be located on the farm beside the mill at their picturesque location by the river, where tours of the mill will only be provided for guests; fish smoking classes combined with a lunch of local products from Woodcock Smokery; Dexter Beef had plans to open a Bovine Museum in the village, a world's first, combining history with a whole sensory experience element, which they plan to revisit post-covid due to investment requirements, while also having their herd genome tested for the historical protein A2 Beta Caesin, which only exists in historic herds, with a view to creating a new product from the milk, should the herd test positive; as well as an interpretative centre at Drummond House focused on the health benefits of both garlic and asparagus, amongst others.

The shifting demand for artisan food and drink products is in line with the literature that suggest that artisan production has regained its value (Teixeira and Ferreira, 2019) and is also reflected in both Ireland's (gov.ie, 2021, n.p.) and EU policy makers' increased interest in artisan food production and the positive impacts it can have on rural development and the economy (Treager, 2005). This is particularly resonant now as the Irish government is currently making funds available to artisan food producers through the LEADER program, as a result of the current pandemic (gov.ie, 2021).

Of interest, is that on the one hand these innovative plans from artisan food producers will add significantly to the tourism product available in terms of both capacity and experiences, benefiting both the visitor, the artisan food producer, as well as the rural economy. However, on the other, at a broader 'brand Ireland' level, as these plans are mainly self-driven, and with no current feedback mechanism in place as outlined previously, it leaves the food tourism agencies out of the loop and therefore external to these developments.

Arguably then, the various food and tourism agencies are not in a position to capitalise on the artisan food producers' plans proactively, to either integrate them into any existing planning, or campaigns they may be working on, or collaborate on future development ideas, compared to if they had this knowledge. This is a concern, because arguably communication and awareness are key to building a consistent national food narrative, without which, puts delivering against existing goals at risk and further research is required to understand how this can be resolved, as this topic is currently absent from the literature.

4.3.2 On a Personal Level:

As a food tourism provider there is little in the literature that provides a view of the artisan food producer from an inside out perspective. While the FSAI (2015) have defined the artisan food producer from a marketing angle, much of what is known about them in terms of their motivations and their business values and ambitions is found in the academic literature that considers them through the lens of entrepreneurship (Tregear, 2005), as previously outlined. And while these perspectives are insightful, the research shows that the reality of who the artisan food producer is in their role in food in tourism on the ground, is arguably far broader and considerably more nuanced than previously articulated.

4.3.2.1 Key Motivators – What is Important to the Artisan Food Producer?

Providing an opportunity to add knowledge and build on the existing literature, the research shows that there are a number of key motivators that drive the artisan food producer in terms of what they do and why they do it, that sit outside of entrepreneurship, lifestyle (Tregear, 2005) and excessive business growth.

What is clearly evident in the research narratives in terms of their motivations and simplified here, is: a passion for the products they make; a keen interest in preserving and perpetuating traditions; an awareness of the importance of Ireland's heritage, culture and the role they play within it, how the places they inhabit are closely connected with the food they grow, the products they create and the importance of preserving them; a desire to educate locals and visitors alike, ensuring people understand the importance and nature of local artisan food and the need to value and promote it; a passion for the land and the sea and the culture of agriculture; as well as a commitment to the environment and its protection.

Important to note here, is that many of these motivations overlap, which adds complexity and nuance not always appreciated or understood by formal agencies and bodies who often prefer the simplicity that homogeneity offers, but arguably are the essence of what gives artisan food producers their inherent value, and what follows is a closer review of these based on the artisan food producers' lived experience.

4.3.2.2 Passion:

Balon et al. (2013, p. 59) propose that “when people are passionate, their view of life is driven by positive affectivity; they tend to give their best and to surpass themselves” and when talking to artisan food producers their passion is discernible, both in terms of the products themselves and their commitment to them, despite the obstacles and challenges they face, discussed later in the chapter. When artisan food producers talk about their products, it is clear that they do not view them as fungible commodities (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) but rather as small batch quality products that are important to them, both on a business and on a personal level.

Marita (Drummond House), who grows garlic in Co. Louth, stated, “I want to grow garlic. I want to be the garlic specialist...so our passion is about quality, about provenance, our story, people buy people, so it goes back to that. Would I lose if I am pumping out thousands and

thousands of garlic packs a week? Yes, you probably do. It becomes a commodity. So, artisan is about holding your quality, your premium(ness) and it is seasonal, and it should run out”.

Jane (Harnett’s Oils) also echoes this, stating “...I think [that is] the thing about doing any artisan food, [there is] so much to do – people say passion or love, or I don’t know what it is, but you’re putting part of you into it”.

While Sally (Woodcock Smokery) claimed that “there [are] two sorts of food producers...those that are in it because they have a passion for food and food production and what they’re trying to create. Then there are those that go into food because they think they’re going to make a fortune, and there’s nothing in between. I don’t think that you can be in between”.

And this is also echoed by Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) who emphatically stated, “I wasn’t driven by monetary gain. I was driven by the passion of it and the culture and the agriculture”.

John M. (Ballyminane Mills) shared his perspective, stating, “I’m very passionate about the mill. And everything with it, where it’s going to go, or what will happen...well, it will stay with me until I go six feet under. It is paramount that the mill is kept going – it’s water powered, it’s the longest mill race in Ireland...you know it’s in the Murphy family name, hopefully it will be fourth generation with my son”.

Adding this research on the topic of passion as a motivator for the artisan food producer to the literature is of real interest, because conceivably passion is what gives them their USP, their edge so to speak, over their more commercial competitors, particularly when viewed through the lens of visitors who in co-creation with artisan food producers may experience this passion in situ, through tasting their food, seeing where it is made and hearing the passion in artisan producers’ food stories, which is increasingly what tourists are looking for when they travel (Richards, 2015). While passion as a motivator for the artisan food producer is a topic absent from the food tourism literature currently, it is recognised more generally through the lens of entrepreneurship, where Cardon et al. (2009) suggest that “metaphorically speaking passion is ‘the fire of desire’ and is central to the development of entrepreneurial skills” (in Arshad et al., 2018, p.16), and this also resonates in light of the artisan food producers’ strong links to innovation, even for those artisans already firmly established as a business.

Worthy of note here too is that not all passion is seen as ‘good’ passion, from an entrepreneurial perspective, with harmonious passion suggested as the ideal over obsessive passion in order to drive the most productive outcomes (Ho and Pollack, 2014). Passion has also been shown to help an entrepreneur perform better, leading to “greater persistence” (Cardon and Kirk, 2013, cited in, Arshad et al. 2018, p. 16), which in line with the literature was echoed by Sally (Woodcock Smokery) in the context of artisan food producers versus ‘big business’, stating, “the bank manager said to me years ago, he said, so we’re really happy to lend to small family businesses like yours, because you persist. He said I’ve seen big companies coming in, bells and whistles, enormous grant aid and they’re running until the grant money runs out and then fold. And he said, we much prefer lending to small people, because we feel that there’s a big issue of pride. You know, not arrogant pride, but you’re just proud of what you do. And you don’t want to let it go”, which arguably from an economic perspective is also important when we consider small businesses’ contribution to the local economy and the multiplier effect that this can have and is therefore a faceted topic suitable for further research.

4.3.2.3 Preserving Ireland’s Heritage:

This passion is also channelled into preserving Ireland’s heritage, which the research shows is important to artisan food producers where they plausibly play a number of key roles. The first is in preserving intangible heritage in the form of traditions, crafts, skills and knowledge relating to food and how it is produced (Heritage Council, 2007), and Sally (Woodcock Smokery) confirms this, stating, “it’s also about preserving the skill because so much of food production is now super automated”, while William (Longueville House) expressed, “our ethos would be farm to fork, you know, we’ve been doing that all our lives. It’s not some buzzword we picked up on recently. My Dad and my grandfather were farmers. And we always grew our own vegetables and reared our own animals for the table. And so, I carried on the tradition with my wife, Aisling”.

Echoing this further, John M. (Ballyminane Mills) acknowledges that the mill is “a hidden gem basically, and it is vitally important that people are able to see something that was done back nearly two hundred years ago”, because admittedly once it is gone, it cannot be replaced.

The second role is related to place and preserving the country’s natural heritage, which is considered to be the land and landscapes, animals, wildlife and natural habitats of Ireland

(Heritage Council, 2007). In terms of the land, Urry (1995, p. 17) suggests that one of the ways that society connects with the physical environment is through “stewardship of the land so as to provide a better inheritance for future generations living within a given local area” and this is echoed by Jane (Harnett’s Oils), who stated, “a lot of people say that you’re only custodians of the land, so it’s what you can do for the time you’re there until you move off [that is important]”.

Regarding traditional animals, Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) stated, “the fact that you fight so hard against all the odds to keep this breed alive, you know, and how important a project that is, and it just happens to be a fantastic product at the end of the day, but we’re talking about a beautiful animal. Fundamentally, what I was trying to achieve was to keep this animal in Ireland. In its home place, you know, keep it from extinction”.

While a third role is preserving a place’s tangible heritage in terms of the historical buildings that are integral to the landscape itself (Heritage Council, 2007). There is a real sense here too that artisan food producers are only the caretakers of what they own, and Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) articulated this saying, “I thought, it’s so rich in history. It’s such a shame that people don’t have any engagement with that, or sense of ownership over that, because I’m only the current custodian of these buildings. Like, I’ll be gone, and I’d like to feel I have bettered it somehow, which I have, [but] I’m only part of the story”. John M. (Ballyminane Mills) also echoed this, stating, “this has to do with the mill, it has nothing to do with me, it’s always to do with Ballyminane Mills, it’s always about the mill and I am just, excuse the pun, I’m just the cog in the wheel...some people have said, I’d love to own this place and I just say to them straight away. Well, see, I don’t own it, I only have the use of it, for my time”.

There is also a concern that perhaps the importance of preserving Ireland’s heritage is not suitably recognised by government or its agencies, with Siobhain (St. Tola) stating, “I think a lot of it is talk, but in reality the understanding isn’t there [in terms] of how valuable it is, how valuable these cultural activities and our heritage is, because when they’re gone, they’ll be gone...but if we don’t preserve our heritage and our culture, because we’re going down the road of mass tourism, sanitising it, losing our *céad míle fáilte*, as I say, losing our genuine unique sense of Ireland, well then, you know it won’t be retrievable afterwards, it will be too late...they say it’s in the program for government and their strategies and that, but on the ground the focus is always big business”. And this is important as it links to how government strategy is experienced on the ground, a topic that will be discussed later in the chapter.

While a detailed review is outside of the scope of this research and deserving of further attention, it is also of interest to note that there are a number of artisan groups and communities operating in Ireland, focused on preserving artisan food producers' skills, traditions and heritage, and many artisan food producers tend to be members of one or more of these groups. However, one point of interest that was raised by Siobhain (St. Tola) and included here, was her perspective on why the branch of *Économusée* in the North of Ireland had a larger and more active community than the South, stating, "*Économusée* Ireland should be a lot more successful than it is, and it's not just food producers, it's not just food, it's arts and crafts and that, that came through funding that was available to government agencies, but in the Republic of Ireland we're not as successful or as coordinated at all as *Économusée* in Northern Ireland, [where] it's a much more of a network. I think it was set up in Ireland for the wrong reasons, it was more about getting funding for a quango agency rather than having the concept, [the] idea, that was behind it", indicating that unless these type of networks were set up correctly and run effectively they are not successful commenting "where networks aren't successful is where it's one, I would say, set up by a government agency for the wrong reasons, just for the sake of keeping funding flowing into their agency". And this is of interest, because in line with existing literature, it recognises the importance of ensuring networks are run effectively in order for them to be successful (Stafford and O'Leary, 2013), as otherwise they cannot achieve their aims and arguably opportunities are missed, which in the case of *Économusée*, is not just protecting and preserving the artisan food producers in terms of their skills and links to culture and heritage, but also a missed opportunity from a visitor perspective in terms of connecting them to engaging experiences, which is central to their mission.

Arguably then, artisan food producers' connection to both the food they produce and the places from where it originates is visceral, going beyond the functional and mundane connections of those producers who operate on a large scale, at both the primary and value add stage of food production, in the pursuit of profit at any cost. Noteworthy here is agrarian Berry (2018, p. 53), who tells us that when farmers are bound to the land through family, traditions, economic need and a "love that enforces care" they care about the land in a way that corporations and machines never can. So, without them to preserve, protect and perpetuate Ireland's tangible and intangible culture and heritage, of interest then, is if as a nation we truly value these things, to whom would we entrust its care to ensure that it can be experienced and enjoyed by visitors (and locals) into the future? Making this a topic

worthy of further research. It is also an issue which links to the theme, risk of loss, which will be covered later in the chapter.

4.3.2.4 Education:

Another primary motivator driving artisan food producers that stood out from the research narratives is the topic of education – namely educating the customer/visitor as well as those in formal educational roles, on the products themselves, the value of artisan produced food and the processes that sit behind them. Often considered from the aspect of the tourist (Mitchell and Hall, 2003), it is noticeably absent from the literature from the perspective of the artisan food producer and their role in food in tourism in Ireland.

Arguably, educating consumers is key in terms of helping them to understand more about a particular type of product, and William (Longueville House) highlighted that when it comes to cider that “it has its challenges, that whole business then of trying to get to educate the customer on what’s involved, [in terms of] what’s the difference between [my cider] and the regular commercial ones” and for him this is important because if customers do not understand these differences, then they will not buy it, never mind pay a premium, in a market that is arguably awash with multiple alternatives. Though for him this effort appears constrained by the fact that he “cannot afford the marketing end of it, and that’s the way it is, it sells, it doesn’t sell”.

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) is very passionate about the value of education, and the role he plays in it, when it comes to oysters, as in his view oysters in Ireland have a lingering poor reputation because of “the horror stories, the myths”, which historically stems from when water pollution was not understood and eating mussels often led to consumers becoming ill, due to the fact “there was no education back then”. While there have been significant improvements since, oysters seem to have fallen out of favour in the interim, and it is only in recent years that they have seen some resurgence. “The biggest thing I found was getting out there with the public, going to events and getting introduced to people and answering these questions for them. It did change a lot of people and other oyster suppliers in the market even said, when you came on board, we thought you were going to put us out of business, but what you’ve done is, you’ve actually increased our business – so more and more people are starting to eat oysters and more and more restaurants are getting more confident in dealing with oysters. I helped abolish a lot of the myths there”. He has also dedicated time to talking to restaurants and working with chefs, educating them on oysters saying, “you got to

remember that fishmongers would normally distribute the oysters for people and the big problem there is they don't know [anything] about it, they don't know the a-z, or the pollution, the grade As, the grade Bs, they don't know. They're not educated on that, which is really sad I think in this country, the country isn't educated. Fishmongers should be educated...all they want to see is that the SFPA has signed off on the paperwork and they don't care if came from wherever, the worst sewer pit in Ireland, they're there just to buy and sell, it's a commodity, it's not a passion you know, and I found that our product was getting lost in that, nobody really understood it...and then I just came to the conclusion, enough isn't being done with seafood, particularly oysters, in this country".

There is also education in the broader sense, regarding the value of local artisan food and how it is produced. Siobháin (St. Tola) is particularly interested in this area, originally having come from a teaching background, stating, "education is very important to me. I'm always encouraging students of all age groups, whether they be preschool, primary school, secondary, or third level colleges, and third level colleges particularly, I mean it has a double effect for me, one, I'd educating people, but some of those, especially from colleges, hospitality, tourism and culinary colleges, they will become my customers in the future, purchasers of St. Tola. So, educating students and adults and then working with farmers [as well]". Her perspective is that by making education a key focus of the tours she gives on her farm to such a wide range of people, it gives her a chance to connect with those that maybe are less aware of the value of quality local food and how it is made when compared to industrially produced food "because there's no point always talking to the converted, so it's important that you do actually talk to other people who are not converted, you know, see what their way of thinking is and see, ok, try and understand the perspective they're coming from, and try and bring them along with you, from a tourism perspective".

William's (Longueville House) has had a mixed experience in this space, stating, "you've got a certain minority of customers that are well educated, and that know their food and will buy the good stuff. But then the majority don't, they're not aware. They're unaware. And then you have a lot that like to talk about it. I did a market for a year, so I have a very good experience, you know, you stand there all day and they say, oh, I'll come back next week, or they'll walk straight by and say this is great, but then they'll come out with bags full of stuff from the supermarket, you know, so they like to talk the talk, a lot of them, but there's a certain minority that do understand and it's only a minority".

Liam (St. Mel's Brewery) also talks about "the need to educate people" when it comes to craft beer. The Irish Craft Brewers' organisation have an aim to promote the wording 'independently brewed' along with the logo of the same name in order to help consumers distinguish small brewers from the larger corporations who they believe disingenuously market themselves as "craft brewers" with Liam stating, "the problem is with the word craft. I've been banging this drum for a long time; anybody can say their product is craft. And who can argue?" This type of topic can also be considered as an example of the types of challenges artisan food producers face when dealing with various government agencies on issues that affect them as a small artisan business, covered later in the chapter.

When visitors tour Killenure, Evaun's (Killenure Dexter) focus is on sharing the rich history and heritage of the Dexter cow's origins and its connection to place, in tandem with how good the product is, stating "we try to educate people about the Dexter story", while Sally's (Woodcock Smokery) interest has shifted to passing on her knowledge and skills through recently introduced fish smoking classes, stating, "I want to come out of production and go into teaching. I've been forty odd years at this, so now is the time to share that knowledge, you know, instead of heaving heavy sacks or boxes of fish around, and I trained for teaching before I ever came here. It's still there, the desire to educate, you know. So, that's where that's coming from and it's interesting now, largely because of Covid, people are really interested in where their food comes from and how it's produced". Of interest here, is how this too links to the topic of loss, as Sally has no-one to pass the business on to and is therefore very focused on ensuring her skills honed over forty years of experience, do not stop with her.

Regarding the educators themselves, there's a view that if they had a better understanding of artisan food producers and how they operate, it would help to illuminate the fact that their processes and methods are not always standardised, with Sally (Woodcock Smokery) stating, "we had a meeting in Cathal Brugha Street, two years ago now, a small group of us from the artisan work group, because we said, we need to get into the college to train the people who are training food inspectors, because they're not all factory standards, they don't understand the methodologies, what it is that we do, how we do it, and we feel it's absolutely essential that we go into colleges and teach the students. And then Darina [Allen] very smartly said, it's not the students, it's the tutors, it's the trainers that we need to get in to train and explain to them the whole process of remote cheesemaking, or what I'm doing, or chicken owners with less than fifty hens, all these aspects of food production need protecting and the

government's not going to do it...". And while she was happy that they "got a very positive response from the deputy principal there, and they are interested...they can see where we're coming from, they're aware of it, but what they're teaching is factory standards, and there's nothing in their program to account for the small artisan producers and for a while there I was thinking they just want to get rid of us all...", she expects any next steps to remain on hold until the pandemic comes to an end. And this is of interest because from a food in tourism perspective, arguably the USP of artisan food producers and what Ireland promotes, is that they are not standardised and instead sit far from corporate 'big business' food producers, indicating that there needs to be a more aligned approach across all relevant agencies to ensure 'joined up thinking' to enable and support the artisan food producer to operate effectively within Ireland's food and food in tourism landscape, respecting their uniqueness rather than it be a weapon to be used against them.

Also on education, John W. (Dooncastle Oyster) questioned whether preparing, cooking and presenting oysters is included as part of chefs' training, based on his interactions and conversations with chefs over the past number of years, stating that chefs tell him, "I know nothing about them, I don't put them on the menu. I've never cooked them, I've never shucked them, you know, and then you know, GMIT and all these schools that are doing food, training chefs, should have some sort of curriculum to educate them, other than just flat fin fish and salmon and stuff like that, which is obviously a bigger industry, and they're making more money out of it and it gets more focus, but because oysters were always exported, nobody really bothered with it here". Believing in his quality product, he has been persistent in promoting it, often to good effect, claiming that "a lot of my clients never did oysters before, until I went in knocking on the door and talking to them. Like, Aniar never had oysters on the menu, JP's menu never had oysters until I got there, now he has them in all three restaurants". What is of interest here too, and should not be overlooked, is the fact that a product with considerable relevance and historicity as part of Ireland's menu is still grown here but mostly for export to France, when arguably instead, it should be promoted and celebrated here as part of our national menu, with John W. stating that "tourists are enjoying [oysters] and I think it should be celebrated a bit more and we should promote what we have, we should be a bit like France promoting that we have oysters, and we can, we're up there in the top as far as I know, Ireland are up there in the top three for quality oysters, you know, but it is not recognized because most of them goes to France, they're getting lost in the French market and they're lost as French oysters".

So, what role then does this focus on education play on the ground? It informs visitors (and locals) about the artisan food product itself, how it is made and its quality versus industrialised versions, but arguably too it informs them about the value of local food and its connection to people and place in terms of culture, history and heritage (Sims, 2009; Boniface, 2016; Richards and Raymond, 2000), all key components of Ireland's food in tourism experience (Fáilte Ireland, 2018; DAFM, 2015).

Importantly, education also has the potential to transfer knowledge, skill and traditions and in doing so, preserve Ireland's intangible cultural heritage (Mac Con Iomaire, 2018), and because this knowledge comes directly from the people embedded in the artisan foodscape, conceivably it lends it an authenticity and a value that cannot be replicated via other sources. And leveraging the artisan food producers' knowledge, skill, as well as their feedback, as an input into government departments and agencies, such as education, helps those bodies to stay connected to the realities on the ground from an applied perspective, as artisan food producers adapt and evolve within an ever-changing marketplace, ensuring that other stakeholders do too. This educational focus is also relevant for both the agrifood and tourism agencies who leverage the image of the artisan food producer to promote Ireland as an attractive tourism (and investment) destination (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015; DAFM, 2015), relying on them to provide what is arguably a depth and breadth of knowledge of Ireland's foodways, as part of the tourism experience, to meet and exceed visitor expectations and drive food in tourism revenues.

Of interest then is why the topic of education, central to food in tourism and one that is clearly important to artisan food producers as a motivator, is not yet captured in the academic or grey literature, from their perspective. Further research is therefore required to better understand the multifaceted role artisan food producers play in terms of education within food in tourism, its impacts, and what development opportunities may exist into the future.

4.3.2.5 Sustainability:

The research shows that sustainability too is a key motivator for artisan food producers in their role in food in tourism. In response to the increased industrialisation and globalisation of food (Richards, 2002; Hall and Mitchell, 2003), research has shown that people's attention has shifted and is arguably now focused on food miles, sustainability and the impact on the environment, which has resulted in an increased awareness of local and seasonal ingredients and the value of buying local (Richards, 2002; Sage, 2010), helping to reconnect the eater

with the farmer/producer (Carroll, 2012; Wood, 2020). This increased awareness is also influencing tourists to make choices that positively impact sustainability (Che, 2006; Soper, 2007) and support local economies when they travel (Sims, 2009), both domestically and internationally.

So, it is of interest that in line with the literature from both a tourist and government perspective (Sims, 2009; Bord Bia, 2020), the research shows that sustainability and the environment hold significant importance for many of the artisan food producers too, from both a food and food in tourism perspective. Along with Longueville House's farm to fork ethos, Siobhain (St. Tola) also shared hers, stating, "my philosophy has never been about quantity. So, it's not about the number of people or tours I get in, it's about the quality of what I offer, and the quality of people that come in. So, it's not about bus them in, bus them out...and I know from a Fáilte Ireland perspective, because I know from being involved in different groups and tourism, that they do a lot of surveys about bed nights and bums on seats and heads on beds, but that's not the best way to look at it from a tourism [perspective]...that's why we have the problems we have...the whistle stop tours around Ireland...but that is not sustainable tourism, and I'm very much about sustainable tourism. And I think just for the sake of climate change...it's the way we need to go, and it's very much at the heart of what St. Tola is about and what we're about in the Burren ecotourism network".

In addition to adopting a zero waste ethos by using every part of the garlic plant in both existing and in-development products, Marita (Drummond House) has embraced a new business opportunity and developed additional farm-based products after a local man asked if he could keep bees on her land, saying, "we're definitely about the sustainability end of things on every business point, it is very important and should be part of your story, because it's vital [to] tourism, [to] everything. We reclaimed swamp land and we planted three acres of deciduous trees with greenbelt as a government initiative so that it uses up waste ground. They need swamp land. You can't even plant in it. So, it's good for the environment. And I thought well the trees are there, brilliant [to have] the bees on the farm...there's beautiful gorse...there's no chemicals...so I said I'd be delighted...he was helping us build the new fermenting machine for the black garlic that we've been trialling...and when I tasted the black garlic, I [said], wouldn't that be lovely mixed with honey because the black garlic tastes like liquorice?...and I thought there's two beautiful natural products that are here on the farm. No air miles. 100% Irish, 100% fresh".

Brett from Wicklow Way Wines is also passionate about sustainability and the environment, stating, “we wanted to be sustainable, environmentally friendly, the whole idea of doing food ecotourism, within this country is that you don’t have to leave, you can do so much here. Bringing in wine from South America means jet fuel is consumed and pollution is created, so people contact us”. He is also on the lookout for sustainable packaging to ship his wine, advising that his wife is very focused on this, “Pamela’s constantly pushing me...how are we going to become more and more environmentally friendly?”, though he is finding it a challenge based on the nature of the product and the fact that delivery drivers are “out there with vans throwing wine around and they won’t give you insurance on it because it’s a liquid glass product”. They also have plans to buy land in order to grow organic fruit so that they can supply the quantity required without adding a huge amount of cost to the production of the wine and therefore to the retail price, stating, “Organics are important. We want to keep everything as natural as possible. So, we’re going to go organic, eventually, [as] we can’t find organic fruit to meet our needs. Certainly, quantity wise, but cost wise, it would just inflate the cost ridiculously, you know, you’d be looking at 40 quid a bottle instead of an already expensive 22 to 25 euro. So, that’s why we want to have the land to grow our own fruit, have it be really...even though the waste from our wine, all the fruit waste goes back into our garden. The filters go into the garden, we don’t have bins at home or in the winery, like everything gets recycled... I go out of my way to keep everything sustainable”.

Also from an environmental perspective, John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) advised that “another focus, another reason why I like oysters is this – it’s clean. It’s a clean industry. We’re not making pollution...and I take pride in that, I take pride [in the fact] that we’re not a pollution industry”.

Much of the literature that currently focuses on the importance of food in sustainable tourism is from the perspective of the tourist (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Sims, 2009) and the benefits to rural and local economies (Che, 2006). And while these areas are clearly important, there is little in the food tourism literature that considers this topic from the perspective of the artisan food producer, and how they contribute to the visitor’s sustainable food in tourism experience, outside of alternative food networks, such as farmers markets, as an example (Sidali et al., 2013).

This is of interest when we consider that visitors’ focus on the environment and sustainability will likely continue to increase in importance, arguably underpinned by consumers’

developing interest in local and sustainable foods overall (Richards 2002, Sage, 2010), and therefore how well-placed artisan food producers are to meet the increasing visitor demand for ethically produced and sustainable food, especially when they often provide the environments within which this food is consumed. Today, Ireland's food in tourism strategy, (and agrifood), is relying on the artisan producer to meet tourists' expectations and deliver on the image of Ireland that is being promoted overseas, and William (Longueville House) echoed this when he said, "the artisan producer is the face of food in Ireland. It's not some big commercial food producer". However, it would appear that it is the artisan food producers themselves who have organically evolved into this space, driven by their own ethos and values, which by default has enabled them to meet tourist expectations.

Everett and Aitchison (2008, p. 164) suggest that "food tourism has a role in securing the 'triple bottom line' of economic, social and environmental sustainability", so ideally, in order to be able to leverage the strong role that artisan food producers are playing in this space (and likely will continue to play), for long term success, dialogue is required to further understand their motivations and long-term plans so that future food in tourism strategies can be aligned by design. This is important, especially when there is increasing recognition that destinations globally are competing to attract visitors, meaning that if we want our focus on sustainability and the environment to be a USP, then as Urry (1995) suggests we must exhibit "tourism reflexivity" to be successful, meaning that as a destination Ireland needs to develop a range of goods and services that will distinguish us from other destinations in order to attract visitors (in Sims, 2009, p. 322). This involves collaboration across a range of stakeholders, particularly those, like the artisan food producer, who are in a position to contribute strongly to the sustainability proposition from both a production and consumption perspective, building on Ireland's already established reputation for being green and clean (Failte Ireland, 2018; DAFM, 2015) to ensure that future strategies and/or initiatives are pro-active rather than reactive to forge ahead of the curve, and further research is required to understand what is required to execute it.

Another angle also worthy of consideration here, is how this links to challenges artisan food producers experience on the ground when engaging with government agencies and initiatives, a topic covered in more detail later in the chapter, such as Bord Bia's *Origin Green* initiative, which charges for participation, and how this may impact artisans' involvement and subsequently their contribution to sustainability within food tourism, a topic also deserving of further research to inform policy makers.

4.4 Theme 2 - The Artisan Food Producers' Experience of Engaging with Policymakers:

Over the past decade or so, there has been an increased awareness of the value of food in tourism to enhance Ireland's tourism proposition and the economic benefits this delivers (DAFM, 2010, 2015; DTTAS, 2019; Bord Bia, 2020; Teagasc, 2020; Fáilte Ireland, 2014; 2018; 2019). Additionally, the provenance, sustainability and authenticity of food and what it represents (Sims, 2009) has become increasingly important to both consumers and tourists alike, resulting in increasing demand for food in tourism experiences that will meet these shifting expectations (Richards, 2002), and feasibly these shifts are unlikely to revert.

At a high level then it is understood that policymakers, within various government departments and related agencies, recognise that artisan food producers play a key role in food in tourism in Ireland, and this is reflected in today's agrifood and food tourism strategy documents and initiatives, which are implemented and executed across a broad range of government departments and agencies involved in food, tourism and food tourism.

And while there is certainly an overarching government objective supported by these converging strategies, namely the promotion of Ireland's food exports and attracting foreign direct investment (DAFM, 2015; DTTAS, 2019; Fáilte Ireland, 2018), there is a reasonable expectation that as a stakeholder who is integrated into, and arguably integral to these strategies and initiatives reflected in the valorising rhetoric they contain, that they would in turn support the artisan food producers in the food in tourism operating landscape. So, it is of interest then that this research shows, based on the artisan food producers' experience on the ground, that this does not appear to be the case and is considered below.

4.4.1 Artisan Food Producers Versus Big Business:

Considering then the various bodies that support the agrifood, tourism and food in tourism industry (and the numerous crossovers), the research highlights a key area of concern for many artisan food producers in relation to how they believe they are treated by various government agencies, when compared to what they term as 'big business'. This is of particular interest when considered in the light of not just the grey literature, but also the academic literature, which clearly articulates the value of artisan food producers to both Ireland's agrifood and food in tourism strategies, through the lenses of overall economic prosperity, rural development and meeting visitor expectations in their quest for authenticity, through their links to heritage, culture and local food (Ibery and Kneafsey, 1999; Sims, 2009), amongst others.

In relation to her experience of the FSAI, Sally (Woodcock Smokery) stated “we need better representation for the artisan producers in this country, it’s all big business. They’ve got the ear of governments, but the small producers are being forced into regulatory controls, which are not appropriate for very small business”, citing an example of how in the face of new EU food hygiene regulations being introduced, France argued strongly for their artisans and “the French cheese makers survived...and at one of the meetings one of the food safety guys said something that got all of us a bit agitated, because he said, well thirty years ago, there wasn’t any artisan production [in Ireland] and I was thinking, where were you hiding? We had Veronica Steele out in Eyeries, creating her wonderful cheeses, I mean that’s fifty years ago”. Arguably this highlights a lack of awareness of the history of Ireland’s food culture, which is a key concern when this gap in knowledge exists in key positions within an organisation that has the power to influence policy, particularly in a competitive environment, when you have other EU countries, who are more connected to their history and are willing to fight for it at a policy level, putting artisan food producers and Ireland’s foodscape at a disadvantage. Also of interest is that the FSAI artisan forum, which Sally refers to, appears to operate more as an information dissemination service, rather than any real opportunity to debate or oppose changes, stating, “they tell us what regulatory controls are coming down the pipeline. In theory, we can object to some of them for the very small producers so that we don’t lose them”.

On the theme of closures, Sally (Woodcock Smokery) continued saying, “since then, I just looked at more and more of my artisan friends being closed for crazy reasons”, citing an additional example of a wild deer and boar farm in north Cork, that had recently been shut down, after operating safely for thirty years. William (Longueville House) also echoed Sally’s comments about France, stating “[France] had a tradition of it, you see, and the EU only came into existence after all these traditions were in place in France. So, they can’t mess with that, because it’s already in place, you know? They are trying to change some of it over there and it is largely stemming from the EU policies. And big business pushing EU policymaking. It would be driving a lot of the pressure on the small producers”.

As a small business, Marita (Drummond House) outlined her experience with Bord Bia, the Irish Food Board, responsible for marketing and promoting Irish food both nationally and globally to drive growth (bordbia.ie, 2021). One of their key initiatives is the Bord Bia *Quality Mark* which “signifies that food has been produced to the very highest standard and you know exactly where it comes from in Ireland” (Bordbia.ie, 2021, n.p.) and is designed to

promote trust and inspire confidence in the consumer, encouraging them to ‘buy Irish’ produced products. It is also linked to their ‘*Just Ask*’ initiative which encourages chefs to include the details of the origins of their ingredients on restaurant menus. While there are arguably benefits to the artisan food producer for being certified from a sales perspective, there is a large amount of paperwork involved in the certification process, irrespective of the business size, which puts a considerable strain on an artisan food producer’s resources and most importantly their time. Marita confided that when talking to other producers, based on their experiences, they advised her not to obtain Bord Bia certification because it would involve too much work. However, she believed that this would cut her off from too many opportunities, and so decided to pursue it despite the advice, stating, “[but] it is bloody hard work to get certification and I’ve said it to them...that for a producer like me, one [person], I do the same audit as Keoghs’ Crisps...I do the same as a big, big food producer that has hundreds of employees in offices with computer systems, with infrastructure, and I have exactly the same documents to fulfil as they have...it’s one size fits all. The lady was with me for eleven and a half hours and we failed the first audit. We had sixty-seven turndowns and I’m fairly bulletproof now. [She was] a very nice lady just doing her job, but I just burst out crying at 830pm and I said, I can’t do this. And you can pay a consultant, but the consultant is €5,000”.

Based on Siobhain’s (St. Tola) experience, her view of Bord Bia is that they utilise the image of the artisan food producer because it serves their purpose in terms of promoting Irish food abroad, leveraging it to create economic opportunity, stating, “it’s about big business. Bord Bia is still about big business. We’re brought on to talk about Irish food because artisan food producers, we’re the kind of ideal, but we’re not the ideal because we’re not big and we’re not exporting, and we don’t employ loads of people”. William (Longueville House) also referenced the big business theme, stating “you need a lot more support from government and you need a lot more joined up thinking. You can’t have one department coming trying to close you down, while another department is saying everything [is] fantastic and rosy in the garden...is the will there? I don’t know. So, rather than talking about how things are great, they need to start acting and putting the artisans in a bracket over there, and putting the mass producer over there, and having a different set of rules for the artisan and a lot more leeway. When you get to a certain threshold, they can start to [push] them a bit more, but they need a lot more freedom to try and get things up and going”.

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) shared a frustrating experience he had with BIM (Bord Iascaigh Mhara) when at the early stages of setting up his business, his oysters started to die, and he was trying to understand why. He advised that when he contacted his local representative for support, he was told “why don’t you give them up because you clearly don’t know what you’re doing do you?” stating, “because I had no money and because I was failing, they didn’t want their name associated with me. While if I had buckets of money and I could throw money in and then they could make a success story out of me, they would have supported me, but they thought I was going to fail. And that was their answer to me. They didn’t come [and say] we’ll try and help you with this, or we’ll try and help you with that, they left me out to dry”, and his sense of why this happened was because he was a new business trying to do things differently stating, “I shook up the whole industry”, and this was not appreciated by the bigger established suppliers already in the market.

There are a couple of key considerations within these examples that arguably link back to the government’s overarching objective of driving economic prosperity and thereby leveraging food as a commodity, providing challenges for the small artisan producer when they are asked to operate at big business level, when in fact they are small producers by design and also as classified by FSAI (2015) guidelines, meaning that they do not always have the time or resources, both considered luxuries to a small business owner, to invest in long arduous processes. If they are not considered ‘big business’, then arguably it is not appropriate to treat them as such. This raises the question as to whether outside of the high-level economic objective, the artisan food producer is truly valued for their multifaceted contribution to food in tourism? Or, whether as the artisan food producers experience, their value on the ground is nominal in reality and overshadowed by the government’s pursuit of larger economic aims (DAFM, 2015; DTTAS, 2019), where their value instead lies in their image, monetised for investment and tourism purposes.

In addition, linking back to the themes of education and preservation, there would appear to be an opportunity to ensure that those in key positions across all government departments and agencies linked to both food and food in tourism understand both the history of Irish food, its links to heritage and culture, making clearer the benefits of preserving it (Mac Con Iomaire, 2003; 2004; 2007; 2011; 2018), through the contributions of the artisan food producer, as well as a better understanding that they are arguably not big business for a reason. Siobhain (St. Tola) highlights this, stating, “Bigger is not necessarily better. And I think where we are at now in the 21st century with this pandemic, and with climate change, there are two things I

keep saying: quality over quantity and bigger is not better”, which also links to Fernández-Armesto (2002) who posits that artisan producers are key to a successful economic future and that future will look much more like the past than was previously predicted. If this is the case, then a formal administrative structure that accounts for artisan food producers appropriately is required, involving stakeholder consultation and further research is required to understand what workable solutions might exist to inform policymakers’ regarding future planning.

4.4.2 Dealing with Government Bodies – Challenges, Conflicts, and Issues:

The research also identifies numerous examples of artisan food producers’ experience of challenges and conflicts, as well as duplication of efforts, when dealing with government bodies and served to highlight the impact this has on them both on a business and personal level, in terms of pressure on their time and the frustrations they cause.

William’s (Longueville House) frustration was evident based on his experiences, stating, “in government, you have a whole pile of conflicting [information]...I mean you have Tourism Ireland saying we have the best food in the world, and then you have the Health Department coming in saying you have to close down because you don’t meet this standard and that standard, and you have the Department of Agriculture saying you shouldn’t have the word brandy on your bottle. But there’s no joined-up thinking when it comes to government on the whole thing, they’re one of my biggest hindrances in trying to exist, and what I do, to the point of, is it worth continuing, you often think, you know?”, outlining the challenge of trying to operate within the convergence of various government departments who appear to be misaligned, causing confusion and frustration for the artisan food producer. Also, important here is how these experiences link to the theme, risk of loss, covered later in the chapter.

When it comes to joined-up thinking, Siobháin (St. Tola), while recognising that Fáilte Ireland and Bord Bia do work together, commented that “there can be a bit of competition between different government departments, like what are Fáilte Ireland doing going into the food aspect of Ireland [for]?...I think the two departments, from a tourism [perspective], I think there could be a lot more working together and joined up thinking there [on] how best we promote our country” highlighting that visitors to Ireland start to consider their food in tourism experience, “once they get off the plane, or boat, or wherever they stop”.

William also outlined the challenges artisan food producers experience trying to stay in business, commenting that “the Department of Health [are] going around closing down every small butcher in the country. They’re a forgotten voice...it’s a real issue...and it’s one I feel

very strongly about...there's no butcher in Mallow [and it is] a town of ten or twelve thousand people, and there's nobody killing an animal in there, whereas twenty years ago, we had five butchers and they were able to source their meat locally, from a local area...now you don't know where they're getting it from. They can't stand over their product, because in my mind, they don't know where it's coming from. Bord Bia will tell you different, they'll tell you about quality this and quality that, and as my butcher says they're great talking about quality, but it's only quality paperwork they want", before adding, "there's a lot of things that have been lost and forgotten. And yeah, we're losing them." And this in itself is a concern as it links to the role that artisan food producers arguably play in preserving knowledge and traditions, which Sims (2009) suggests visitors connect to authenticity and is something they look for when they travel. Noteworthy too, is how this also links back to the importance of an on-going dialogue with artisan food producers as stakeholders, in order to ensure their valuable contribution to Ireland's food in tourism offering, for the long-term.

Another issue raised focused on the duplication of efforts, and the time impact this can have on a small producer. Siobháin (St. Tola) shared her experience, stating, "there's an awful lot of agencies or people working in different sectors and there seems to be, from my perspective, a lot of duplication. I [get] emails about something that's being run, say Fáilte Ireland is running something or other and next thing I get the same email from somebody within the Country Council. The Council now are taking on roles [in tourism] and there seems to be duplication going on. You have people in Fáilte Ireland and now Councils are taking on a tourism officer or something, yeah, so it's duplication [as I see it]. So, if you're starting off [something], you'd say to yourself, do I talk to that one, or would I talk to this one, or do I talk to them all? You've no time to talk to them all because you're running your business, so you have to figure out, ok, who is the person I actually need to talk to?"

Jane (Harnett's Oils), who is based in Northern Ireland, was clearly frustrated with her dealings with local government and what she terms as "bureaucracy" in her pursuit of obtaining PGI status for their rapeseed oil, stating "our Environmental Health [Department] don't want to do the audit for it because they don't understand what they have to do, even though they've asked me to do all the work for them, to do the audit, [then] they turned around and said oh no, we don't know what we're doing, so we don't want to do it. So, it's more local bureaucracy, they don't want the hassle". On a personal level, she added, "I think I was very disillusioned [about it] and that's kind of made me step back and go, we're going into this one hundred percent, trying to do all that we can do and use all the marketing tools

that are available for us, and our own Council/Government are not helping us. So, when you're on your own, a one-man band, it's hard to just not take it personally. I think having done all the work for [it], I just was like, I have burnt out and [threw] my hands in the air", confirming that securing the PGI would really help to encourage more tourists to visit not just them, but also the local area, which is very historic and underexplored. And this is of interest, considering it aligns with the type of tourism offering that visitors are looking for – history and heritage, a learning opportunity, food tasting, all set within a beautiful landscape (Reynolds, 1992; Richards and Raymond, 2000). So, why then is there not more of a focus on delivering this by local government, and not just for the benefit of the artisan food producer themselves, but in consideration of the wider benefits for the local area, in terms of attracting more tourists, and the multiplier effect it can drive overall? This in part can be explained perhaps by the fact that compared to the south, Northern Ireland's tourism proposition is in its infancy and as such it appears that they may not yet have figured out their overall tourism product and proposition within both their own region and in conjunction with the south, with Jane (Harnett's Oils), stating, "everybody's fighting for their own area [and] between that and especially whenever they've already picked [who they will promote], and they're only promoting a certain area on top of that, so it's trying to get your areas up [the list]. I'm in Armagh, Banbridge and Criagavon Council, so, within our area then there's fighting within that because Armagh obviously is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. In Banbridge in recent years, it has the TV studios, and they did the Game of Thrones and you're then fighting between food and non-food". and is a topic worthy of further research, to understand the overall Ireland food in tourism product and the opportunities and challenges presented by Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland working collaboratively.

Origin Green, Ireland's food and drink sustainability programme, is also run by Bord Bia. Two artisan food producers raised the fact that you have to pay to be involved with the initiative as an issue, with John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) stating, "it's all these things that you have to pay into as well to be with them. And when you're struggling to get your business up and running, and you can't afford to get into these things, it's not easy you know? So, I had to devise ways of going around that and getting out there myself, which is what I [did] really and that seems to be working". Sally (Woodcock Smokery) was a little more cynical about how it is operated, stating "I don't sign up to *Origin Green* because that's giving somebody a huge amount of money for them to say that you're in *Origin Green*. It's got bugger all to do with the quality, it's just that if you've got enough money to give them, then they'll promote

your product”. And this too is of interest because it raises a concern as to whether the requirement to pay is a significant barrier to entry and if so, does that mean participation is skewed more towards bigger businesses, as conceivably it is unlikely that larger food producers will struggle to pay into this initiative in the same way a small artisan food producer might, especially considering the costs appear to be the same for all, irrespective of business size. However, in the interest of fairness it is important to call out that those businesses eligible for Bord Bia’s marketing assistance grant (MAP) can have these costs covered, subject to criteria. However, also noteworthy is that some of the criteria will likely serve to exclude the smaller artisan food producer, certainly at the early stages of business set-up, as a turnover of €100 thousand is required to qualify. Potentially favouring ‘big business’, linking back to the concern discussed previously, another topic to consider as a follow up then, is whether this gives larger food producers an unfair advantage in the marketplace over the artisan food producer, particularly from a food in tourism perspective, when we know visitors are valuing sustainability (Che, 2006). In addition, it is important to consider why this conflict exists in the first place when government strategies are arguably supposed to enable the artisan food producer in light of what they can contribute to the food in tourism landscape and is therefore deserving of further research.

The research also highlights a certain level of confusion encountered by artisan food producers, when faced with what is a vast array of potential supports on offer, as it can sometimes be difficult to navigate through when it is not always clear what exactly is on offer, and therefore where it might be best to focus your efforts. Echoing this, Marita (Drummond House) stated, “there’s fantastic resources – LEO Louth, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, there’s endless amounts of bodies and access [and you are] going, if I had known this last year...and if it’s just Bord Bia alone and I’m clicking and I could have been doing online orders, making up the boxes...and then you’re going I really should contact Bord Bia again and you know I really should check in, and then these emails come in from LEO Louth and everybody [is], and did you know?, and I must click on that link, and then I’m going I must sign up for that. And then I’m going, that was last week. I forgot to sign up for that. So, you have to be conscious you’re not desk bound...it’s the difference [between], do I get an extra €100 in today and it puts a van load of diesel in for me that can keep me going to make money, or will I sit on my computer and not get that €100? So, you have to voice the business comes first”.

This also links back to the issues of time, resources and effort mentioned in previous examples, which often as a very small business artisan food producers struggle with. This example highlights the importance of time to a small artisan producer who often must decide between the value of understanding what is happening in terms of the nice-to-know events, campaigns and supports on offer as examples, versus having to focus on physically getting their product out the door from a sales perspective, in order to generate cash flow. Arguably, this needs to be a consideration of the various departments and agencies before adopting a ‘one size fits all’ rule, as this approach is not always workable for small artisan food producers.

Based on the artisan food producers’ experiences, a more streamlined and aligned approach across the various government departments and agencies involved could help to promote better ‘joined up thinking’ and help condense the time and effort required to engage with them, with Boyne et al. (2003, p. 133) suggesting that “there is a requirement for a clearer definition of roles for support organisations and a framework for these organisations to work efficaciously together to achieve the effective implementation of strategies. Equally this approach could help to deactivate the palpable sense of frustration these experiences are generating for artisan food producers and is arguably deserving of further research to define solution and inform policymakers.

4.4.3 Falling Outside Business Norms:

The research also shows that based on their experiences, dealing with various government departments can also be challenging for artisan food producers, when they fall outside of the norm, and this is another area of interest when we consider that artisan food producers by their very nature operate differently and are not doing things the same way as ‘big business’ (in fact they are often not allowed to), especially when it is these very differences that arguably makes them unique, and therefore valuable.

Brett (Wicklow Way Wines), when setting up his business, realised when dealing with the Revenue Department, that being different led to confusion, stating “and then to make matters worse, revenue, because we’re the only ones who are doing it, and still the only ones who are doing what we do, didn’t know what we were, they didn’t even know what license we should have. So, fruit berry wines, not being a grape wine falls under sweets. It doesn’t mean anything about being sweet, it’s just where it is in the infrastructure of [the Department of] Revenue. So, our license actually lists us as a sweets manufacturer, which is completely

random and doesn't make any sense whatsoever" while adding, "but we didn't care as long as they let us do what we want[ed] to do".

Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) also experienced, and continues to experience, issues because the beef cattle she farms are outside of the industry norms, stating, "Dexter [breed] isn't even recognised by the Department of Agriculture really. We petitioned to the Dáil there three years ago for our own nitrates division, which is for the slurry...they have us classed as Holstein Friesian cows when we're one third of the size. So, on paper we produce too much slurry, and we get penalised for that every year, even though I said I could measure the tanks and back it up with science. No, they weren't having it, no tolerance for us whatsoever because we're not the norm. So, if you're not the norm in this country, you're not really taken seriously. That's my experience now if you're any way different at all". Clearly frustrated she continued, stating, "...our answer from the Minister for Agriculture, the letter I got back [said that they] were not prepared to do any special favours for [us]. And I wrote back and said, I wasn't asking for any special favours. We were going to back up our claims with science. We're a native Irish breed, why can we not have our own nitrates division? [But they say], 'no, we're not doing that for you'. Because, if they did it for me, they'd have to do it for the Kerry cow, for the Moylee and for the Drummond. I mean it's only four new boxes they have to create. But they just won't do it because we're not relevant".

And while an arbitrary decision by civil servants to classify a business in a 'random' way may solve a problem initially, realistically this is a concern, because if a department restructures, or people leave positions, or if the business looks to make changes in the future, it could lead to issues or challenges for the artisan food producer, because it is unlikely that the reasoning for the decision has been formally documented. In contrast, when new classifications cannot be added to accurately reflect the reality on the ground, then it is of interest to understand why such processes cannot be updated? Just like businesses must evolve to stay current and compliant, arguably so too do government departments and their processes, and the mechanisms to do this should be an integral part of their operating model, with the relevant departments working together (Boyne et al. 2003), and open to feedback from those operating on the ground if there is a genuine desire to advocate for and support artisan food producers within Ireland's foodscape.

4.4.4 Grant and Investment Challenges:

For many start-ups or those business looking to diversify or grow, funding and investment is often a necessary requirement. The research shows that for many artisan food producers the experience of securing funding, grants and loans is often a challenge, based on what gets funded, the effort and time involved, often for quite small grants, which leads to frustration, but also considers more optimistically how funding may be easier to secure in light of the current pandemic, with government efforts focused on rebooting the economy.

Marita (Drummond House) stated, “primary growing doesn’t get funding. So, if you’re a primary producer, and that was the one thing that disheartened me a little but, you don’t get funding towards growing your primary crop. But as soon as I change garlic from its primary source, there’s funding available towards the machinery, towards the building, but you have to pay everything out first. So, they’re the things that are daunting in the sense that if I just stuck to regular garlic, there’s no funding available for me at all” going on to share that in her experience “horticulture has been forgotten for so long. As I said, it’s always been the big names – dairy, beef, mushrooms, chickens, cheeses, they’re the big guns”.

William (Longueville House) shared that he had tried to get investment via the LEADER scheme stating that he had “spent a lot of time and money doing these feasibility projects, they call them, and they did about four or five [of them] and it was just more hassle than it was worth. You have to do these feasibility projects in order to get funding basically. You get a bit of funding to do the feasibility project, but it wasn’t really worth the time and the amount of effort we put into it. We got it all done and presented [it] and they said, we’ve run out of funding now. Tough luck”.

Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) shared an example of applying for funding through the bank, which was initially unsolicited as they contacted her to offer her a Covid expansion loan, telling her that she qualified. “So, from September to December, she was ringing me every day saying look, I’m not trying to put pressure on you, but the pot is getting lower, a lot of people are getting loans and there’s less and less money in the pot, so I don’t want you to lose out. I did an awful lot of work for her. We did a five-year business plan, the accountants and [me], put a lot of work into it. The last piece of the criteria was to have a zoom conference call with her and an agribusiness guy, and basically the agribusiness guy benchmarked me against commercial beef and commercial dairy farming and refused to budge on that, cannot think outside of the box, totally linear thinking, no recognition historically as to what we had

achieved. And they wouldn't give us the loan. Just like that after working for months and months and I know that's the bank and that's not a government entity. But that's just an example of...you're not getting support because you're different".

Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) also shared another example, highlighting her frustration, stating, "€2,500, a small grant we were due to get, there this time last year, and it went over a timeline that they didn't make us aware of. I got a big speech off the head of the enterprise board here, a guy I know well, telling me how well we represented Tipperary in Ireland, even abroad, and how brilliant a woman I was, and this, that and the other and yet they wouldn't give me €2,500 because it went over two weeks. And the money was sitting there from Europe. They're civil servants. They're not civil. They don't serve. They're linear thinkers. They're box tickers. It's no good. It's no good. If that's the way people are going to think, we're never going to progress, really, we aren't, you know".

On the other hand, Wicklow Way Wines were able to secure funding from LEO Wicklow, though Brett advised that they had significant savings which they used to invest in the business themselves, availing of revenue's Start-up Capital Incentive (SCI) initiative. On general grant or funding applications through government bodies he stated, "if you're going to get 25 grand or something like that it's worth it. If you're going to get 2 grand, it's a pain in the butt, depending on where you are in your journey". This was also echoed by Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) who stated, "I'd say in in the seven years, we've only managed to draw down about €20 thousand in grants. You know, a lot of grants that we went for, we just don't fit the criteria, we're so off-piste. That's the problem. And so much time goes into these grant aid applications, like you could spend six months on them, because they'll keep sending them back to you telling you - well, you didn't put that in the right place or the date should have been on the left hand, right corner or whatever. And by the time you get the money, like €5 thousand is now only worth €5, because the amount of time you put into it has devalued the grant completely. So, I just got to the stage where I got really, really tired of all that messing. And I just thought, you know, I make the equivalent of the grant, by just getting on with it and selling more carcasses, you know what I mean?".

More optimistically Liam (St. Mel's) recognises that the pandemic is likely to mean that there will be more government funding and grants made available to small businesses to help drive growth post-Covid, stating "what happens in an economic crisis is government will seed the local economy because that's how you get the economy back...so, if you're a small business

and you can ride the wave of tsunami in a pandemic, you can come out of it in reasonably good shape with support, supports are easier got and they're a little bit more generous" advising that they had applied for a grant two years ago and been refused, stating "now there's every hope that we'll get that same grant, because the small local producers are really badly needed" .

This topic is of interest as it reinforces the challenges and frustrations that artisan food producers experience as small businesses in terms of the demands on time, resources (sometimes there is only one person) and effort required to get things done and how this experience appears to have resulted in an unwillingness to access low levels of funding due to bureaucracy and inflexibility. Arguably this is counterproductive and suggests that government agencies and other institutions would benefit from revising their processes in order to facilitate and support artisan food producers in the context of delivering against defined strategies, enabling progress and development rather than impeding it.

It also highlights the importance of small artisan food producers to local economies. Micro to medium size enterprises are often the backbone of a country's economy and in crisis situations, like a pandemic, the recommendation is that governments to do all possible to keep these businesses and local economies running (Csath, 2021), particularly as indigenous Irish businesses will help to keep money circulating within an economy, generating a multiplier effect, in comparison to non-indigenous or global corporations who ultimately take money out. This was echoed by Liam (St. Mel's Brewery) who stated, "We're never going to be, you know, you're never going to see a gigantic brewery in Longford in 100 years-time, employing 500 people, that's not going to happen. But we are a small part of that. And collectively, even collectively, those 100 brewers [who are now set up in Ireland] are only a small part of that. It's an important part because we operate in our local economy. We're supporting local producers as well. And we employ local people. The money we make goes back into our local economy. It doesn't go to a hedge fund over in the UK for Diageo PLC, so, I do think lots and lots and lots of smaller producers is actually better for the environment and for society than one big giant beer factory in one corner of the island".

Conceivably, this is one of the reasons why artisan food producers are integral to government strategies in the first place, so it is a concern that so many have encountered significant obstacles that hinder their efforts to further expand and embed their businesses within Ireland's foodscape. Unnecessary bureaucracy, inflexibility and a disregard for artisan food

producers' operating models therefore has the propensity to make it less attractive for them to remain in business over the longer term, compared to 'big business', who have the ability to withstand economic shocks and a workforce to buffer the more mundane administration tasks. Additionally, the level of funding discussed here is mainly aimed at SMEs, which arguably means that it is this cohort of businesses that are ultimately impacted, (not 'big business'), indicating that the very instruments in place intended to support artisan producers are also the instruments that impede them. This leads to a necessary discussion then on why this is the case, what policies and processes need to be reviewed and the risk this type of challenge poses regarding the potential loss of artisan food producers to Ireland's foodscape. The topic of overall funding for artisan food producers and how this system operates is currently absent from the food tourism literature and is deserving of further research, with the aim of considering some of these issues and their impacts in more detail to inform policymakers as a potential instrument for change.

4.4.5 Artisan Food Producers – the Risk of Loss:

In addition to the experiences shared previously regarding the loss of artisan food producers who have been closed down or squeezed out of the market, there were also some feelings of frustration and despondency palpable in conversation with a number of artisan food producers, as a result of the conflicts and challenges they had experienced in their everyday. While being in business is not without its overt challenges certainly, there is a concern that for some, it may be overwhelming enough for them to question whether their business can feasibly continue, and this is a topic currently absent from the literature. The risk in this case is not just arguably the loss of the business itself and the subsequent impact on food tourism, but also what the loss would represent in terms of heritage, tradition, food culture, skills, while also raising the issue of impact to agriculture, the question of land use, and succession, amongst others, highlighting the importance of ensuring that there are the right supports in place to help small artisan producers be successful and viable for the long-term, and importantly, as outlined previously, also ensuring there are mechanisms in place to promote and action cross-stakeholder dialogue.

An example to highlight this comes from the interview with William (Longueville House), where it was possible to pick up on a real sense of despondency based on a number of challenges he had experienced, such as: his struggles to get a good price for his cider because customers were confused by the term 'craft' stating, "Guinness can put 'craft' on their label,

you know, the customer is confused...it's a word that doesn't mean anything anymore really", making it harder for customers to understand what made his product truly different; his experience in dealing with various government departments giving him conflicting messages and guidance, the bureaucracy (and costs) around so many things, giving an example of trying to sell the jams from his garden produce, stating "[you are told] you have to go off and get each one tested, which I don't know, it's about €6 hundred to get a shelf-life test, by the time you even get your head around [it]. And then you say to hell with it, you know?"; the challenges Covid-19 have presented in terms of the hospitality side of the business being closed for a considerable period of time, reducing income, and some of the changes they now have to implement (reduced staffing) when they reopen again, stating, "at the moment, we're just trying to exist, because of the pandemic, and the banks don't give any support", and arguably these changes could bring another set of issues in itself.

Later during the interview, he stated, "we're all getting older, and we don't know if our children are going to go into it, which is an issue, whether you go on or don't go on, you know? Would you encourage your children to go into it? I don't think so. Unfortunately. So, yeah, it's a bit sad, but that's the way it goes, you know, this is the world we live in" and so I asked him directly if he was feeling despondent based on everything he had shared and the way he had spoken about it and he responded "I think you pretty much hit the nail on the head there. I don't really like to say that but that's pretty much the way it is".

John M. (Ballyminane Mills) came across similarly as the pandemic has resulted in him securing another job to support his family, stating, "out of the business I had, there's 3% of it back" and this appeared to be the final straw on the back of a very mixed business journey since starting the business in 2011, stating, "And you have to have the appetite for it. And at the moment, I haven't had the appetite for this for quite a while...but to go back into this now again and having to go back and get on the road again and try to drum up more sales...up until maybe last October, November...I had the bones of about 140 [customers] altogether. I would say 50 of them will not be back". And while his business may be struggling in terms of the product, he remains passionate about the mill itself, though did express concern for what may become of it in the future, stating, "this is part of the Murphy generation, Murphy family and you it's important to keep the place the way it is...now, I can't speak for my son. [He] is going on 10 years of age now, what he does with it will be his own business, but I could see myself that it could get lost in his generation".

While the pandemic is central to both of these examples, and once lockdown lifts, the horizon may change, arguably it is vitally important to Ireland's food culture to really consider the impacts of these (and other) artisan food businesses disappearing from the landscape, as once they are gone, they cannot be replaced. It is important then to consider what steps need to be taken to ensure that in as much as possible these losses are prevented, and further research is necessary to understand what these steps would involve. Of interest too is that both of these examples are small farms, which are also central to government initiatives through their rural development, agrifood and tourism strategies in terms of preservation and diversification, meaning funding is available to support viability and loss-avoidance (DAFM, 2015; Teagasc 2020; gov.ie, 2021), which links back to the funding and grant challenges artisan food producers are encountering. With so many supports in place, the question arises then as to why they are struggling? The research provides some early insights to add to the literature and further research is required to examine this topic in more detail.

4.5 Theme 3 - The Importance of the Food in Tourism Experience:

The extant literature sets out the importance of the food in tourism experience to the visitor (Kim et al., 2009; Sims, 2009), with research showing that up to 90% of those that travel to Ireland expect high quality food and drink experiences during their visit (Fáilte Ireland, 2018). Combined with the shift to what Pine and Gilmore (1998) term the experience economy, today tourists are looking to connect to culture and heritage (Sims, 2009) through experiences that are authentic and engaging as well as varied and memorable (Sims, 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Richards, 2014; Carù and Cova, 2003).

Considering this, and the role that the artisan food producer conceivably plays in food in tourism, it is of significant interest then that the research shows that providing the right experience is of substantial importance to them and is reviewed in more detail here.

4.5.1 Providing the Food in Tourism Experience:

Artisan food producers as purveyors of local, handcrafted and traditional foodstuffs are often connected to the places where their product is grown/reared/made and are therefore arguably well positioned to meet tourists' expectations, as outlined above, explaining why they are an integral part of both Ireland's food and food in tourism strategies (DAFM, 2015; Fáilte Ireland, 2018). The research has already shown that artisan food producers who consider themselves to be involved in food tourism, view this role as secondary, as well as identifying some of the challenges they experience on the ground, in their attempts to navigate the

workings and supports of various government agencies in their attempt to pursue a role in food in tourism. It is of interest then that the research also shows that delivering great experiences to visitors is as important to artisan food producers as it is to policy stakeholders and what they provide, and how they go about it, is broadly in line with the literature. However, of note is that their provision of experiences appears to be driven by the intrinsic motivations, knowledge and experience of the artisan producer themselves, rather than any push from external agencies or particular guidelines they've chosen to follow.

As an example, Brett (Wicklow Wines) provides a tour of his production site, where visitors get to see how the wine is made, smell the aromas, culminating in a tasting of the three wines they produce matched to local foods to augment the experience, stating, "I want people to come in and [then] they walk away with an experience, as opposed to just a tasting, you know, you could go into a wine store and taste wine, that's different. This is an hour and a half or so where I show people how it's done. And they get an experience that they will never have [otherwise]". Comparing the experience that he provides to some others available, Brett continued, saying, "when people come in on tours, they typically went to Dublin. You see Guinness, you see Jameson, the same old, same stuff, you know? And I always say to people, you know, when you come on this tour, you see how wine is made. If you go to Teelings, if you go to Guinness, you don't see anything about that stuff, there's not a hint of it, you walk through Guinness and they have some barley sitting on a table, and they have an aromatic room which is make believe anyway, but no one shows you how it was done and I think people when they can walk away with an experience, it's far more important. You don't forget experiences. You just don't. It will stay forever and then they become brand ambassadors in many respects, you know, they go home or, and then they post stuff on the web", which aligns with the definition of a positive memorable tourist (MTE) proffered by Kim et al. (2010), through actively engaging in an activity or learning experience.

In addition to Brett's awareness of the importance of memorable experiences to the visitor and of interest here, is his awareness of authenticity (Sims, 2009) and consumption space inauthenticity (Everett, 2012), which we know is important to visitors, without actually referencing the word authenticity, indicating that his desire to provide a more authentic experience is intrinsically motivated and could be linked to the fact that his connection to food in tourism is because of his own interest, stating, "we were somewhat aware because we're into it [ourselves]", as well as plausibly some of the other factors that the research identified as key motivators of artisan food producers, such as education, for example. This

too is of interest, in terms of how artisan food producers, as consumers of experiences themselves, translate what they consider to be good experiences based on their own, into the creation of food in tourism experiences for others. This is a topic absent from the food tourism literature and further research is required to broaden out the knowledge on food in tourism experiences to inform all stakeholders.

Liam (St. Mel's Brewery), while considering opening up the brewery for tours, has set up a brewery shop of sorts, stating, "we have thought about [tours]. We haven't put a plan around it yet. We're just not sure – there's a fair bit of work we would have to do on our presentation and all that. So, we're about to invest...at the moment, the brewery shop is a counter at the door, so we're going to invest some money and make that a lot more presentable and a lot more experiential, so people will come in and they won't just have bottles of beer to look at, they'll have you know, diagrams of our processes and all that sort of stuff. And once, we have that in place, we'll probably start to look at tours", highlighting an awareness of the importance of the experience to the visitor, again arguably intrinsically motivated as he confirmed that "we haven't approached Tourism Ireland yet, we haven't gotten into that", so has had no external guidance, though the fact that he has considerable business experience having worked with other breweries over his twenty-year career, could certainly be a factor.

He also spoke about authenticity suggesting that while locals look for local food and drink "it's more driven by tourists who come to the area...they ask what beer is popular, what food is local, and I think tourists nowadays aren't looking for the paddywhackery, well some of them are of course, some of them want to get on the bus and drive around the likes of Killarney, but a lot of them are looking for a bit of authenticity, and what's probably a real Irish experience in a real Irish restaurant, rather than a place in Temple Bar or someplace like that. They're looking to eat what the Irish eat and eat with the Irish, and that's all come on in the past 5-10 years, driven probably by the way we market ourselves overseas", stating, "so, what I see now compared to what it used to be, is restaurants are looking for local produce and using that as a USP when they're advertising to tourists. And that wasn't the case, even 5,6,7,8, years ago. And it's driven a lot by what the tourists are looking for when they get here. So, we're in a huge amount of restaurants locally, around the lake and Lough Ree, Longford down to Athlone and the other side to Roscommon. And those restaurants exist because of that lake and because of the tourism the River Shannon brings. And that's where we do a lot of our hospitality trade".

And this is of interest too, because it is in line with the existing literature outlining the importance of local and authentic food and experiences to visitors and confirming that it is indeed what they look for (Sims, 2009; Richards, 2002; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014), while also acknowledging the effectiveness of Tourism Ireland's marketing campaigns abroad, recognising that Fáilte Ireland's strategic aim of shifting tourists' perception of Ireland as "a place with a great food and drink experience" (Fáilte Ireland, 2018, p. 14) is perhaps on track to be realised, which further research could confirm.

4.5.2 The Value of Experiencing the Experience:

Conceivably there is more to the experience than just providing it, there is also the experience itself to consider. In line with existing academic literature, the research also highlights artisan food producers' understanding of how the sensory nature of food (Kivela and Crotts, 2006) and its connection to history, culture and tradition (Richards and Raymond, 2010; Mac Con Iomaire, 2004) has an impact on how visitors experience the experience of food in tourism, with Sally (Woodcock Smokery) stating, "it's an amazing aide de memoir", explaining, "we did three Sunday specials last year where we celebrated the return of the wild Salmon and we cooked it. And it was wild salmon and Max said to me, what are we going to do with the salmon? I said, leave that to me, we're going to boil it in salted water, which is the way that I've always cooked wild salmon, cut it into steaks, drop it into boiling salted water, as salty as the sea, bring it back to the boil, switch it off, leave it ten minutes, it's done. And it needs nothing else. And will there be sauce? No! And there were two people that came and ate, and they stood up after they'd eaten, one in particular was a very successful restaurateur, got a Michelin star last year. He said, I can't believe how transported [I was] tasting that wild salmon. He said his grandad was from Cork and they were from Longford and they'd come down every summer and he said, that's what we'd eat with grandad, and it just brought him back", ably highlighting how artisan producers are ideally placed to provide experiences visitors can actively participate in, which is a good example of creativity and co-creation (Richards, 2012), resulting in a memorable tourism experience (Kim et al., 2009), arguably enhancing the area's attractiveness as a result (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015).

Interestingly John M (Dooncastle Oysters) likened experiencing oysters to that of wine, when asked on stage at a festival if his oysters were better than others, stating, "I remember turning around and saying to her, do you have a preference in wine? Is it the same as your husband or another member of your family? Or do you all like different wines? Well, oysters are the

same way, I said, there's no one particular oyster that's perfect...as I said I don't see them as just oysters. I tried different oysters and the one thing I noticed about oysters is, different bays, different flavours". And in his attempts to promote oysters through his appearances on stage at festivals with chefs like JP McMahon, and taking his oyster bar van to events and festivals as well, arguably it's a novel way to get visitors, both local and international, interested or perhaps (re)interested in an ingredient that has historic links to Ireland's food menu (Mc Con Iomaire, 2014), through education, (which the research also shows is a key motivator for artisan food producers), and tastings, recreating traditions in new ways, arguably helping to both preserve and future-proof them in the process, reiterating the important role artisan food producers play in the country's foodscape.

Likening cider to wine, William (Longueville House), stated, "You know in Australia, South Africa, you can go to the vineyards, and you can have a meal and have a really nice experience, and buy a few caseloads of wine, so why shouldn't that work here with cider and brandy? I think it's one for the future, you know, but we need to make ourselves more presentable to get to that stage", and this is in line with current literature in terms of what constitutes a good wine tourism experience (Mitchell and Hall, 2006), but what is of interest here is how these types of experiences have the potential to be reconstructed and translated into an Irish setting, through the medium of cider, subsequently building out Ireland's food in tourism product, with the potential to further enhance Ireland as an attractive destination (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015).

In line with the literature, Brett (Wicklow Way Wines) also referenced the sensory aspects of food in terms of how it can be viewed, smelled and tasted as part of his participative experiences, which we know visitors find engaging (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), stating, "when you can see it in the vats and you can smell it in the air, that whole multifaceted sort of experiences is important, you know?". Of interest here is that while Brett is certainly aware of the importance of sensory elements to the overall visitor experience, he did not link this or any other elements of what a good experience should contain to meet or exceed customer expectations, to any input or guidance from Fáilte Ireland's (2018) *Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023*, or in fact any other tourism agency guidelines. This is similar to other artisan producers, who also appear to be both creating and providing food in tourism experiences on their own terms. This suggests two further areas of interest – one is the degree of overall awareness of Ireland's food in tourism strategy at a broad level by artisan food producers, and two, circling back to a topic discussed earlier in

the chapter, the level of engagement and dialogue that exists between tourism agencies and artisan food producers (or food tourism providers generally), especially when considering the overall aim of the strategy is to “consistently enhance the visitor experience through food and drink and make a strong contribution to overall tourism revenue growth” (Failte Ireland, 2018, p. 33), as arguably it is hard to execute against a strategy if there remains a lack of awareness, particularly if the issue is systemic, as it could pose unnecessary obstacles for start-ups or those artisans diversifying into food tourism. Additionally, without ongoing dialogue, there is limited opportunity to share best practices, build on successes and leverage intellectual capital productively.

The research also showed how the artisan food producer is embracing Ireland’s evolving food culture referenced by Liam (St. Mel’s Brewery) who stated, “We did a lot of work in the last twelve months, on our brand, on our website, and on how we align ourselves with food. So, if you look at our labels now, we talk about food a lot, we always did, but we probably didn’t do it in a very polished manner, we tried to polish that up and have a little bit of fun with it too. So, you can see some of our tasting notes recommend that people eat a ‘spice bag’ with a beer or something like that, which is authentically Irish too”, again demonstrating an awareness of the importance of authenticity (Sims, 2009) to visitors’ experience, while also highlighting the importance of food in tourism evolving in order for it to remain relevant. Richards (2002, p. 6) suggests that “food tourism cannot only be about preserving the past, it also needs to be about creating the future” and this is key because while leveraging Ireland’s culture, heritage and traditions provides a unique selling point for its food, it cannot become a parody of itself or conceivably it runs the risk of appealing to just a very niche type of tourist resulting in food in tourism becoming unsustainable in the long-term.

4.5.3 ‘Food Stories’:

Of the four components that Fáilte Ireland (2018) consider to be key to the food in tourism experience, two are related to the ‘food story’, suggesting that the story must be distinctive, and the narration must have a unique character. Additionally, artisan foods are considered by Boniface (2016, p. 141) to have “a good cultural story” and with visitors demand for co-created experiences continuing to increase, as active participants they want to do more than just taste a product (Richards 2015), they want to meet the artisan food producer, see how it is made and hear their story, in pursuit of a memorable experience that can be recalled in the future (Kim et al., 2010).

In line with both the academic and grey literature, the research shows that artisan food producers are keenly aware of the importance of having a unique food story to promote their product and provide visitors with a memorable food in tourism experience, one that tells the story of the person, the product, its history, its connection to the land, all underpinned by the artisan food producers' passion and pride in what they do, and is arguably an integral part of the visitor experiencing the experience.

Liam (St. Mel's Brewery) echoed this, stating, "I think selling food and selling beer, selling anything now is all about stories. And being able to tell our story. So, I do think it's important. Like the name St. Mel is instantly identifiable to a lot of people that [are] from Longford. You have the cathedral, you have the college who were very famous in GAA circles, you have all kinds of associations. So, anyone who's from Longford or anybody who is related to somebody from Longford, or anybody who's from the midlands, be that someone in Dublin or in America or the UK, they all know the name St. Mel and what it means. And a lot of the connections we make overseas are through 'the Longford mafia', if you like", suggesting that word of mouth plays a part in getting them on visitor's radars, which aligns to Dougherty and Green (2011, p. 3) who suggest that word of mouth (WOM) is "the most significant method of advertising and promotion practiced by producers, and it is the main way that tourists learn of local food tourism opportunities".

Eavaun (Killenure Dexter), is very emphatic about how important her story is not, just to the locals as it is "their story too" but also to the visitor, stating, "I think they're fascinated with what we have to offer, you know, that they weren't aware of how rich the culture was, and how good the food is. And you know, what the backstories are, I think they're fascinated because they weren't made aware of it. Certainly, that's been my experience. I know, we've got something really special going on here. But you know, that's the feedback I'm getting from visitors. They're just blown away by the whole story and the product and everything. And they were never expecting this. And nobody told them this existed".

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters, suggests that "everybody wants to hear a story nowadays. If you're not willing to expose yourself and tell the truth, you're going to get nowhere because everybody wants to know who you are, what you are, why you are", and this was also similar to Marita's (Drummond House) view, stating, "people buy people, they like your story, they like your provenance, and you know, they enjoy supporting your business", indicating that it

is an important part of her business and brand to be able to articulate her ‘garlic’ story and the history of the farm.

Sally (Woodcock Smokery) stated, “if you understand the food of your culture, then that’s such a gift to have” and of interest here is how all of the artisan food producers interviewed for this research were passionate about their products, their connection to them and to the place where they come from, irrespective of the challenges they face. Their food stories become a key part of the visitor experience reemphasising the importance of policymakers working to alleviate some of the challenges artisan food producers face, to ensure that both they and their food remain an integral and valuable part of Ireland’s foodscape into the future. Additionally, the rich content of these stories could be leveraged for future campaigns that bring the artisan food producer to life in their food in tourism role, further enhancing Ireland as an attractive destination (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015), and one which could arguably promote a competitive advantage in any shift to an artisanal economy (Fernández-Armesto, 2002) in the future.

4.5.4 Balancing Tourism with Production:

As discussed previously, the research shows that production is the primary focus of the artisan food producer with food tourism as their secondary activity. Recognising that the best ways to experience artisan food are through tourism products similar to those developed from wine tourism, such as on-site tastings and tours (Mitchell and Hall, 2006), means that the tourism activity has to either interrupt, or run in parallel to production, which elicits various responses and approaches from artisan food producers, considered here.

Siobhain (St. Tola), as previously outlined, to balance her role between production and tourism has scheduled tours to run on set days/times in order to provide organisational structure around both activities, allowing for the successful operation of both, stating “we were very strict, you know, with these things, because we’ve had some groups ringing, the bus driver saying we’re going to be a half an hour late, and we were saying, well if you are, then the tour has to be cut short. Because we’ve another group coming in, or our person who’s giving the tour has to have her break, you know, or we could have trucks coming in, delivering or something, it’s not a big farm. So, we’ve had to be strict, that’s one of the key things I learned...we’ve kind of structured it, that it works, tourism still, I mean, the income from farm tours still plays only a small part of our business”.

Interestingly, two artisan food producers are considering the option of periodic open days as a means to balance the production and tourism aspects of their business. Jane (Harnett's Oils) mentioned that on a trip a couple of years ago she noted that the Connemara Smokehouse had an open day every week where you could just call in, stating, "I think that's where it works quite well. I think they're a member of Good Food Ireland as well, where you can just say look, the door is open on the first Wednesday of every month, or whatever it is, if [you are] there, you can show them around and if you're not, you're going to be doing your [work] anyway. I think that's where you feel like you've come across it, or if you know what's happening, I think that's where it lets you work out what you're doing, rather than it being so contrived", which arguably could lend a sense of authenticity to the experience, while also making it less labour intensive for the artisan food producer. This approach is also something that John M. (Ballyminane Mills) is considering, based on his current circumstances, stating, "I was kind of siding towards having an open weekend for [the mill]" pointing out that in addition to the production aspect of the mill he also has taken on another job during the pandemic saying, "I had to go get a job, like that's Monday to Friday, so then whatever work I have to do, I kind of try and base the Saturday, all day Saturday in the mill, and Sundays for the family. So, I'm kind of pulling back the reins a little bit. I'm not really...my appetite, as I said is not there for tours the whole time, every weekend. It's not there. I'd rather maybe just open up the mill for two days in the summertime, advertise it, and whoever wants to come can come, you know, something like that", also highlighting the need to balance the demands of work with his personal life, confirming, "I used to work seven days a week", another aspect of the demands made on an artisan food producers' time. While outside of the scope of this research, the topic of time is also worthy of further consideration, as it was raised a number of times relating to the challenges the artisan food producer faces as a small business.

Of interest here is the impact these type of approaches have on the availability and accessibility of food in tourism experiences as part of Ireland's overall food tourism product. This links back to production being the primary focus of the artisan food producer, discussed earlier in the chapter, reinforcing the requirement for stakeholder engagement and ongoing dialogue, both to inform overall strategy as well as identify opportunities to provide supports that may allow for flexibility in terms of what experiences the artisan food producer can provide, and when.

4.5.5 Agritourism:

Beer et al. (2002, p. 215) suggests that the “the real artisan is the farmer” and six of the artisan food producers who participated in this research study are farmers, with four of them providing tours and tastings from their rural farm locations. And this is of interest because it dissents from the current agritourism literature, which does not account for a connection between the farmer/producer and food tasting experiences and the role that the artisan food producer thereby plays in agritourism (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013).

From an Irish perspective, this is of particular interest considering the government recognises a distinct link between artisan food producers and their role here, in what they term as ‘agri-food tourism’ and is providing funding through the LEADER program, as part of their rural development funding, to support them, along with other rural business, including farmers and other small food producers, recognising their innovation and adaptability in light of the current pandemic, during what Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue calls a “critical time” (gov.ie, 2021, n.p.)

Understanding then the valuable role the artisan food producer plays in food in tourism, through agritourism, and their subsequent contribution to rural economies (Ibery and Kneafsey, 1999; Sidali et al., 2013), as well as connecting visitors to culture, heritage and traditions through a taste of place (Reynolds, 1993; Richards, 2002; Boniface, 2016), via food tastings from their rural production spaces, further research is required to ensure that as a key stakeholder they are fully represented in the agrifood tourism literature.

4.5.6 The 3rd Space:

The current literature tells us that in providing food tourism experiences, business sites become visitor attractions, which may require the artisan food producer to provide their experiences in a “third space” (Everett, 2012. p. 548), an environment that is sanitised or constructed in a way that separates the visitor from the production area, and it is in this space rather than the original space that a particular element or elements of the experience are provided, raising concerns of rendering an authentic production experience as inauthentic because it is experienced in an inauthentic space (Ibid).

The research shows that where production is live, artisan food producers have little choice but to demonstrate their production processes in third spaces, in order to comply with strict environmental health regulations, as well as invariably numerous safety regulations to protect

visitors, employees and their insurance cover. Of interest, is that as the providers of these reconstructed or sanitised experiences, the artisan food producer did not have a sense that the visitor was losing out on the experience, or had they ever received feedback to suggest that the visitor considered the experience to be inauthentic.

William (Longueville House) stated, “we haven’t really got to the stage of being a visitor centre, work visitor centre, you know, you need to have a certain amount of people and then you need to invest a little bit in it to bring it up to standards. We haven’t got any real complaints about how rustic it is, well a lot of people [that] come like it, but then you have the likes of the excise people saying you can’t go in and see the stills, that you know, it’s a forbidden area, that’s another issue, you know, there’s a few little barriers. But it would definitely take a bit of investment to get to that stage, whereas you know at the moment we’re just trying to exist”. Of interest here is that William believes he must upgrade his visitor space because it is rustic, even though visitors seem to like it, as conceivably the rustic feel in itself lends an air of authenticity that could disappear if the environment changed. Feedback is an important part of understanding authenticity from a visitor perspective (Everett, 2012), which adopting a formal feedback process could support in this case, especially as the old adage ‘if it is not broke, do not fix it’ comes to mind.

Jane (St. Harnett’s Oils), stated, “They come in, they get a wee bit of history, a bit about [us], and then they see what rapeseed is, or what the oil seeds are that we grow. Then they’ll see the press and then they get to try the oils and then usually we have tea or coffee or something after that. I don’t let them see the bottling or the labelling, because that’s my room where it’s all EHO (Environmental Health Office) approved and it’s all closed up because there’s only me in there, it’s only me that can spread germs as such, so, I can’t really show them that. The only thing that I can really show them is the press, which is upstairs, and it’s a massive press. We were thinking [about] how to do this with Covid [and] maybe getting a smaller press to show them what it looks like and have it moving or producing, just so they can see how it actually works”. When asked if this might affect the visitor experience, she did not appear to think that it would, stating, “whenever we’ve had people around, we’ve just been ourselves and done it that way” continuing on to explain that it was more the tour operators she had a challenge with in that they wanted all tours to be homogeneous, stating, “you have to do exactly the same stuff, it’s a script you’re reading off, and you need to serve them with the same food each week, each day...it seems to be very much we need this all like this, which I think goes against everything that we’re trying to portray across, but I don’t know”.

And this is of interest, because in light of the fact that visitors are often excluded from certain areas, to see certain things in working food production areas, due to health and safety regulations, outside of the control of the artisan food producer, which is the most concerning regarding authenticity? Contemporary visitors understand that these regulations exist and yet if it can be ‘constructed’ so that they can see a part of the process in a sanitised environment to help learn about the product and its story, is this an acceptable ‘inauthenticity’ compared to scripted tours and a standardised experience driven by a tour operator with no connection to the food or place, driven arguably only by numbers and profit? Current research indicates that there is an “emerging sense of solidarity and empathy between consumers and producers, where food tourism sites have become theatres where alternative spaces and ‘rural’ lives are constructed and supported in resistance to concerns over rising costs and agricultural challenges” (Everett, 2012, p. 551). However, absent from the literature and of interest here, is whether visitors themselves in these environments consider the experience inauthentic, especially considering that the artisan food producer may consider it authentic and are just providing a different access to it, based on necessity. Alternatively, they may not be familiar at all with the concepts of inauthenticity or 3rd spaces in this context, so further research is required to gain a detailed understanding from both perspectives, to add to the academic literature and inform policymakers and artisan food producers in terms of planning.

Additionally, this example raises a concern about how much influence a tour operator can exert on the food tourism experience. Klemm and Parkinson (1997, p. 4) argue that “international tour operators are profit maximising companies for whom the long term sustainability of a particular destination is secondary to their business objectives”, relying on the wherewithal of the artisan food producer to stand up to them to retain agency of, and integrity in their food in tourism product, although conceivably circumstances may determine both the likelihood and outcome of this type of situation, such as funding access and sustainability, and is also deserving of further research.

4.5.7 Ireland as a Food Destination – Untapped Potential:

All businesses must understand the environment within which they operate and future proofing and planning for the future must be a key consideration. That the artisan food producer adopts this approach is important not just from a business viability perspective, but also for policymakers and stakeholders more broadly, because arguably it informs their medium to long-term plans, supports innovation, promotes adaptability, all factors that play

into the depth and quality of not just the artisan food tourism product, but also ‘brand Ireland’s’ as well.

Recognising the importance of food in tourism experiences to visitors (Fáilte Ireland, 2019), with a plan to increase Ireland’s reputation as a food tourism destination (Fáilte Ireland, 2018) and understanding the key role that food plays in enhancing a destination’s overall attractiveness (Ab Karim and Geng-qing Chi, 2010; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015), it is important that policymakers are connected to artisan food producers, as previously outlined, so that there is a level of awareness regarding what is happening in the food in tourism space from the perspective of the artisan food producer at the ground level, and therefore what opportunities may exist, and how they may be leveraged in collaboration.

While discussing the fact that Ireland is not yet considered as a food destination in itself, Sally (Woodcock Smokery) stated, “That is happening now. And I’m amazed at the numbers of people that come here from Italy. Italians absolutely adore Ireland. Adore. The fresh fish, the cheeses, you know it is slowly evolving, but there is a developing charcuterie culture now, and you know, Macroom mozzarella, bless the boys, their mozzarella won gold at the world cheese award, knocked the Italians off the top of the peg. That’s a really good indication of what we’re capable of here. The right people to be involved. It’s great”.

Similarly, Liam (St. Mel’s Brewery) stated, “I think we’re miles ahead of a lot of other countries in terms of our food offering. If you go to the UK, and there’s obviously lots of really high-quality food in the UK, but there’s a lot of very average stuff. A lot of the so-called gastropubs in the UK are miles behind an average gastropub in Ireland. Somebody told me, we have Centre Parc in Longford, which I’m sure you’re aware of, somebody told me that when they came to Ireland first to look around, they realised they couldn’t transfer the restaurant offering from their UK camps to the Irish camp, because Irish people wouldn’t go for it. Because we expect a higher quality, you know. And I think, obviously, there’s still some kind of poor-quality stuff as well, but I think we’re far ahead of a lot of countries, in all fairness”.

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) stated, “I personally think Ireland should be an oyster destination really. We produce so many quality oysters and most of them are sent out to France. The country didn’t know what a quality oyster was bar a few key places until I started pushing the product out on the market. Now you see everybody’s coming up with similar or better quality than me, trying to compete with me, which is what’s that done is it’s raised the

bar for Ireland as an oyster destination and people are starting to recognize it, tourists [are] enjoying it and I think it should be celebrated a bit more and we should promote that we have, we should be a bit like France promoting that we have oysters”, potentially highlighting a gap in our existing proposition, and an opportunity to promote Ireland on the basis of its quality oysters to potential visitors.

To embed future success, Siobhain (St. Tola) was adamant that in order for Ireland to be successful in food in tourism for the longer term, there needs to be change at government level, stating, “So, I think the mindset has to change really within government-to-government agencies about, you know, what the priorities are for this country? And we have huge potential because we're an island nation [and] what we can offer from a tourism and food perspective, very, very few other countries or regions can offer. Very few. And I don't think the agencies really understand that or appreciate it. They're going for the conventional and the mass tourism, the mass business. Where we should be able to, we can offer such uniqueness with the right supports, that it won't be about money. It won't be about money, because we will be able to name our price in this new world we're going into after the pandemic”, highlighting that the experience of Ireland is unique and that visitors will not get that anywhere else.

Ireland's food in tourism proposition, until recently, has played a supporting role in the visitors' tourism experience, although with a number of strategies and initiatives in place over the past ten years arguably this is shifting, highlighting the potential for it to become a peak experience (Quan and Wang, 2003), and Ireland as a food destination in its own right in the near future, should the proposition continue to be developed and enhanced in the right ways.

It is both of interest and important then that many artisan food producers see opportunities to enhance Ireland's food in tourism proposition and the role they can potentially play in delivering it through great visitor experiences, while also highlighting some of the existing challenges and obstacles impeding them, as outlined previously. It is important then that this knowledge is leveraged by policymakers in a way that informs future planning and circles back to the necessity of having ongoing consultation and dialogue with artisan food producers as key stakeholders, as this will serve to strengthen Ireland's food in tourism product, through organisational agility, with a view to long-terms success.

4.6 Theme 4 - Against the Grain:

As this research adopted a phenomenological paradigm, it is not unusual for additional themes to come to the fore based on participants sharing their lived experience of the everyday, emphasised by Given (2008, p. 462) who articulated that “once an aspect of our experience is articulated, given language, and given public expression, we have a different access to it” and a key selection of these are discussed here.

4.6.1 Experiencing Sexism:

While sexism remains a contemporary topic, it is absent from the food tourism literature, so it was of interest that it appeared in conversation with two out of the five female artisan food producers during the course of the research, and their experiences are outlined here.

Sally (Woodcock Smokery) raised it in the context of her business’ food inspections, stating, “I have very aggressive inspectors. Most of them are men. And I think they get a bit miffy you know...what [does] this woman think she’s doing? Would she not be better off knitting socks for the grandchild? So, there’s an attitude, there is a misogynistic attitude to women running a business, which is not traditionally a woman’s business, even though it was a hundred years ago. Nowadays it tends to be the male of the species. So, it kind of unseats the blokes that come out to inspect, a bit”.

And this perspective on sexism towards women who are operating in what could be labelled as traditionally male environments, was also called out by Evaun (Killenure Dexter), who stated, “There’s very few women in the beef industry and I would be the biggest beef farmer, female beef farmer...I always worked in male orientated environments, from foundries, to I drove bikes, to I worked with a lot of builders, whatever, but I never really understood that I was a woman, I never had an awareness of my sex, to be honest with you, until I came into the beef industry. And overnight, I became that ‘bloody woman’, because what they actually thought was, they’re so aggressive in the beef industry, they thought that I was making a mockery of farming”.

And this is of interest because sexism can have numerous impacts, from making a person feel generally uncomfortable, a reluctance to perhaps engage in conversation or debate or arguably become a barrier to women (or men) who are deterred from getting involved in a particular activity or profession, because of what they may have heard, or experienced. Other than the literature covering sexism in the workplace, which tends to be organisationally

focused, this is an under-researched topic, certainly in food in tourism, and may be of interest to future researchers, especially considering the artisan food industry is set to grow further and is integral to both agrifood and food in tourism development strategies (DAFM, 2015; Fáilte Ireland, 2018). I would argue too that there is another opportune link to education here based on Sally's (Woodstock Smokery) experience, to ensure officials have an appreciation of Ireland's food history and culture as well as a functional and practical knowledge, particularly when it comes to artisan food production, which arguably represents more than a sum of its parts.

4.6.2 The 'Outsider' Experience:

In food tourism it is usually the tourist who is considered the outsider (Ellis et al. 2018), so it was of interest that this topic appeared in the research from the insider's perspective, the artisan food producer.

Eavaun (Killenure Dexter) shared her experience of being 'the outsider' when she first moved to her farm in Tipperary, stating, "It took three years for the locals here to take me seriously because, you know, I was just that foolish woman trying to do a foolish thing, making a mockery and actually the bullying was ferocious and albeit that I'd been in the [Irish] *Times* and the *Independent* [newspapers] and done lots of interviews, they don't really read those kind of papers down here, they just read the *Farmer's Journal* and I was in the *Farmer's Journal*, but still, that didn't really help us, but when I got on to *Ear to the Ground* [farming tv show], that's like the bible for farmers, so the social currency that that afforded me, I mean, within a day we were heroes. We'd gone from zero to hero, literally, because [previously] we were the laughingstock". She further explained how she was treated by a local farmer who she had business dealings with, stating, "he gave us a really, really bad time...people were cutting our fences and turning off the water supply. And it was real serious bullying. And then, as I said, after getting on *Ear to the Ground*, it all stopped".

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) has also experienced being treated as an 'outsider' when after considerable adversity his business became more successful and he won a McKenna Guide's award, stating, "I got an awful lot of abuse online, you know, practically bullying really. I would say [it was] because, if you look, you never seen another oyster farm get a McKenna Guides' award, I'm the first in the country. I think [there were] a lot of jealous people around the country when I first got it. Because I wasn't a part of their clique. I wasn't part of their group, you know. A lot of people were very annoyed that I managed to get that award, and so

I was getting sent insults on Messenger and Twitter”. He also highlighted how he set up his own oyster festival because he felt that some of the local festivals had “gone so snobby and so expensive...I wanted it more family orientated” stating that because he wasn’t linked in with local agencies, he “was never going to get anywhere near those stages anyhow...[I’m] definitely an outsider, because I’m not part of the clique”.

This is of interest because both oyster and beef farming are established industries in Ireland and like any industry, new entrants can cause concern due to increased competition as arguably new USPs are devised in order for the new entrant to gain market share. Often increased competition can raise the bar in terms of quality and fairer pricing but arguably it does not mean that the existing players or stakeholders are necessarily going to play fair, especially if they perceive they, or the norms, are being threatened, as it would appear in these cases. While in these cases it appears to have spurred the artisan food producers on, not everyone would perhaps react the same. Arguably these scenarios can be barriers for new entrants, impacting diversity, creativity and development and as a topic currently absent from the food in tourism literature, further research is required to fully understand the scale of the issue and its potential impacts.

4.6.3 Food Fraud:

Absent in the food tourism literature and therefore of interest here, is the topic of food fraud, raised from a number of different angles by various artisan food producers, based on their individual experiences.

At a broad level Spink et al. (2016) considers food fraud as an “illegal deception for economic gain using food”, which Johnson (2014) suggests can be “committed along the whole supply chain by suppliers, food manufacturers, retailers and importers” (in Kowlaska, 2018, p. 1275). Current literature on food fraud is generally focused on adulteration and misrepresentation of ingredients through the lens of consumer health (Kowlaska, 2018), although certain foods are considered more open to fraud such as honey, olive oil, coffee and fish as examples, where food fraud involves “the substitution of a high-value product with a less expensive or lower quality alternative” (Johnson, 2014, p. 2). Considering that the artisan food producer is inextricably linked to authenticity (Ibery and Kneafsey 2009; Sims, 2009), conceivably fraud of any kind poses a serious risk to the artisan producer, to the food in tourism experience, and to Ireland’s overall food reputation which has strong links to the economy (DAFM, 2015, Fáilte Ireland, 2018) and is considered here.

Evaun (Killenure Dexter) raised the issue of food fraud centred on food substitution, having been made aware that both food service companies and restaurants were selling a generic beef product but linking the provenance to Killenure Dexter, stating “you find that [a restaurant has] gone and bought a similar product, but it’s brought in from France, where it’s a faux story, you know. People going into the restaurant think that it’s your product, but it’s not because they used your product once or twice and it’s been on the menu, but now they’re actually getting a version in from Rungiers that’s ten times cheaper, so there’s a lot of that going on as well in restaurants” suggesting that this practice “should be outlawed...if people are caught doing that, there should be massive penalties, because you’re stealing somebody else’s IP, an IP that they’ve spent years building up”. She explained that she has had chefs contact her and send her photos of beef being sold to them as hers, as well as customers who had been served it in restaurants, stating, “I even had a guy drive from Wicklow with the product he’d been sold as our product...I only had to look at [it] and I could tell him that it wasn’t our beef. He said, ‘how can you be sure’? I said, I’m 100% sure. The colour isn’t even right. The fat is white, and it’s been clearly trimmed in a factory. I said, the fat should be bright yellow from the beta carotene in the grass. This is an animal that’s been finished and fed in a feedlot on nuts, whereas our animals are out on grass, so the fat is always bright yellow, it’s nearly orange”.

Interestingly, she also stated, “the chefs themselves were very disappointed. But we also found out that a lot of them knew that [it] was happening. And they were still selling our product, this product under our name, generic beef under our name, because they wanted to have our name on their menu so badly...it’s just all about having the good names, the good artisanal producers’ names on the menu, and people go, oh great, but they don’t even question it sometimes, if it’s just generic, how do they know?” continuing on to say, “I think the most important thing is to stop people prostituting your brand. For me, that’s the biggest thing, because that’s a really big experience that I’ve had, people prostituting my brand. So, for me, I find personally that a lot of people are saying that they’re getting their beef [from me], maybe they think they are, but they’re not”. Bord Bia encourages restaurants to add information about the provenance of food to their menus through their *Just Ask* initiative aligning with the increased interest in local food that customers are demonstrating (Richards, 2002; Sage, 2010), raising two key questions. Firstly, whether restaurants are genuinely struggling to meet shifting consumer expectations because of cost pressures, as an example, and so are faking provenance instead? And secondly, whether these type of examples can be

considered as genuine oversights, as the product was legitimately on the menu previously? Alternatively, there could be other factors at play and as such, this topic is deserving of further research, especially considering if restaurants are including inaccurate food supplier details on their menus, as arguably they are leveraging an artisan food producers' reputation fraudulently and cheating the visitor out of a legitimate experience.

John W. (Dooncastle Oysters) also raised the issue of food fraud from the angle of deception for monetary gain, in the form of farmers versus suppliers, stating, “[established businesses were] upset with me because I started posting actual pictures of baby oysters growing on a farm, the different stages of working on the farm. What has [name removed] got? They don't have any of that. They're not farmers. Now if you look at their website, they call themselves 'suppliers' of Galway Bay oysters. They were [name removed] Oyster Farm before and now they've changed it to 'suppliers'. You had another guy, [name removed], and he started doing the same thing, buying oysters all over the country and most of the oysters were coming from the east coast over here to the west coast and trying to sell them off as Achill Oysters. And I suppose, a few of these people, they were all working under the BIM and Bord Bia regimes because they had money, and I'm not well liked in the industry because of that to be honest”. He then added, “I think it's a positive change. I believe in farm to fork and believe that the people that are growing the [oysters] should be getting the credit, not the guys that are just paying for a name”. Considering that food is recognised as an important medium that connects people to place (Henderson, 2009) and that Ireland's food in tourism strategy is focused on “enhancing our national menu and amplifying its strong connection to people and authentic place” (Fáilte Ireland, 2018, p. 14), it would suggest the importance then of those links being genuine, especially for those visitors who are searching for authenticity because they are “dissatisfied by what they perceive as the 'inauthentic' nature of contemporary consumerism” (Soper, 2007, cited in Sims, 2009, p. 333) and therefore should be a major concern for those involved in promoting Ireland as a tourist destination, understanding the risk that this type of food fraud can pose to Ireland's food tourism brand in a fiercely competitive market.

Also from an angle of deception for monetary gain, in the beverage space, Liam (St. Mel's Brewery) discussed his experience of how the bigger corporate beer brands have reacted to the rise of local, independently brewed beer brands, like his own, suggesting they've taken a two-pronged approach in their response, one being financial incentives to hospitality to keep them out of pubs and restaurants, stating, “the other approach they've taken, and this started

happening in the last five years, they've started creating kind of fake local brands. If you look at the advertising for Rock Shore, from Diageo, it's very much based around the Wild Atlantic Way. The imagery is all about the Atlantic Ocean and all that sort of stuff. Heineken brought out a beer and called it Cute Hoor, which was sold in Cork as a local beer and they got into a bit of trouble for creating badges for pubs that made it look like the brand was a local brand, even though they were just putting some sort of putrid industrial stuff through [the lines]", continuing on to say, "but the fact that they've done that speaks to the success of local producers, they're obviously feeling a bit of a pinch and they're going after it".

Melawar and Skinner (2020, p. 682) argue that "some [beer products] may be deliberately named to create a fake brand provenance and associations with a particular place"

highlighting that unlike food fraud, some research on this topic in the drinks industry already exists, suggesting it is a recognised issue. Considered in the context of the big drinks brands, artisan drink producers are small producers, with limited resources to challenge these types of brand proliferation, and therefore would have to rely on government and/or industry mechanisms to protect them. For the small artisan food producer, the FSAI's (2015) guide to the use of food marketing terms offers guidelines, and in doing so, arguably protections, when it comes to the use of terms such as artisan, farmhouse and traditional, as examples. Of interest then, is that today, there are no similar guidelines in place that cover terms such as craft in the brewing space (arguably the same for cider) in the same way, raising a question as to why this is and is a topic deserving of further enquiry.

In the context of artisan food and the role it plays in food in tourism, the overarching concern here then is authenticity, which we know visitors look for in food when travelling (Ibery and Kneafsey, 1999; Boniface, 2016; Sims, 2009) seeing it as "authentic products that symbolise the place and culture of [a] destination" (Sims, 2009, p. 321). Fáilte Ireland (2018) also stipulates that the food product being authentic, is one of the four essential components of Ireland's food tourism experience. Arguably then, visitors are being deceived, and these examples of food fraud put visitors' experience of authentic food and its connection to place and culture at risk. When an experience does not meet expectations, or is found to be inauthentic, then it also has the potential to impact a destination's attractiveness (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2015) and therefore the food memories that visitors will take home and share with family and friends (Kim, 2010), posing a risk to Ireland's food in tourism reputation. Additionally, the artisan food producer is also impacted as sales are syphoned

away in the short-term, their brand is diluted, their quality and reputation put at risk, which can also impact their future sales and viability.

This limited review would suggest that food fraud in food in tourism is a serious topic that is deserving of further research from a number of angles to understand the current landscape, its impacts and therefore possible solutions, to inform both policy makers and educate all relevant stakeholders, including consumers, especially in light of Bord Bia's *Just Ask* initiative.

4.7 Conclusion:

The research provided an in-depth and more nuanced view of the artisan food producer, based on a “detailed examination of their lived experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 34), through the phenomenological paradigm, arguably not currently captured in the extant literature. The research showed that the artisan food producers' role in food in tourism sits not just between production and consumption, but also arguably between economics and culture, preservation and innovation, and history and modernity in an evolving and often challenging environment. It also discussed the food in tourism experiences they provide and introduced a number of emerging themes absent from the literature review, which align with the methodology of the research, which allows for experiences to be “expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems” (Ibid). What follows is a summary of each section and is outlined here.

4.7.1 Theme 1: Who is the Artisan Food Producer? An In-depth View:

The research question underpinning this section of the findings and discussion and answered here was: Who are the artisan food producers and how do they perceive their role in food in tourism?

From a business perspective, the research showed that production and sales stood out as the artisan food producer's primary focus, with their food in tourism role as secondary, with some not clear on whether they played a role in food in tourism and if so to what extent. These findings highlighted a need for ongoing and consistent consultation and dialogue between government departments/agencies and the artisan food producer, as a key stakeholder, in order to effectively manage Ireland's food in tourism product, build strong working relationships, provide relevant supports and ensure that information is effectively disseminated. Through the lens of entrepreneurship, while many were comfortable to place

themselves in this category, the research found that it was with a strong commercial and innovation focus, rather than from a lifestyle perspective as captured previously in the literature (Tregear, 2005). This arguably highlighted a potential conflict in how they are viewed, which is not reflective of their reality, particularly within a commercial context, with the findings indicating a risk of artisan food producers being pigeonholed as a less important stakeholder when compared to corporate food businesses, a concern when in a post-industrial society, it is likely they will play a larger role than perhaps was once predicted (Fernández-Armesto, 2002) necessitating that the right support framework exists. The research also demonstrated the artisan food producers' strong links to innovation with a considerable number of interesting and exciting products in the pipeline, all self-driven, which only served to further emphasize a disconnect to government departments and agencies, highlighting again the advantages of ongoing consultation, dialogue and feedback in order to facilitate alignment and collaboration on the further planning and development of Ireland's food in tourism (as well as food and tourism generally) proposition.

From a personal perspective, dissenting from the research that individualises lifestyle as a key motivator for artisan food producers (Tregear, 2005), the research showed that passion, preserving Ireland's heritage, education and sustainability were all key motivators for artisan food producers instead. The research found that these motivators are intrinsically important to them and are what plausibly give them their inherent value, their USP so to speak, as they inform how they interact with visitors, the landscape and environment, the experiences they provide and their desire to educate, shaped by the knowledge that they are often custodians, bound to the land through family, traditions, economics and a "love that enforces care" (Berry, 2018, p.53), also positioning them as key protectors and preservers of Ireland's tangible and intangible culture. These motivations, which strongly connect the artisan food producer to both the food they produce and the places it originates go considerably beyond the functional motivation of profit that large scale producers value and pursue, and while arguably artisan food producers must be profitable to remain viable, the research shows that it is not profit at any cost. Arguably too, through the lens of cultural anthropology, in line with existing literature, it is these motivations that highlight the key role they play in food in tourism as important providers of both the food and drink experiences and often the environment through which tourists experience a destination (Getz et al. 2014; Kivela and Crofts, 2004; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000), as they look to connect to local culture and heritage through authentic experiences (Sims, 2009; Bessièrè, 1998; Boniface, 2016), which

artisan producers are well positioned to provide as purveyors of hand-crafted, traditional and/or farm produced foodstuffs. Additionally, what also stood out here from the research was the need for engagement and dialogue between artisan food producers and the relevant government departments and agencies in order to ensure that these motivations are being captured and considered in terms of planning, particularly considering that “food tourism has a role in securing the ‘triple bottom line’ of economic, social and environmental sustainability” (Everett and Aitchison, 2008, p. 164), reinforcing the importance of the artisan food producer as a key stakeholder and ensuring that the right frameworks exist to adequately capture their contribution.

4.7.2 Theme 2 - The Artisan Food Producer’s Experience of Engaging with Policymakers:

The research question underpinning this section of the findings and answered here was: how do existing government strategies and agencies support artisan food producers in a food in tourism role?

The research showed that the experience of artisan food producers on the ground is at considerable odds when compared to the valorising rhetoric contained within strategies and policies that purport to support them within their food in tourism role. This section focused on a range of challenges the research shows artisan food producers experience through their engagement with policy and decision makers, across numerous government departments and agencies, amongst others. Some key findings highlight challenges the small artisan food producer faces against ‘big business’, the time and resource effort required to gain access to funding, the lack of joined-up thinking across various departments and the frustrations this can cause. Arguably, being the antithesis of ‘big’ business, in terms of their production methods, and their links to culture, heritage and authenticity is their USP, but this places them outside of the norms, which could be said to put them at odds within a system that appears to simultaneously valorise and impede them. And these experiences culminate in a risk of loss that is concerning.

In this context too, the requirement for ongoing consultation and dialogue between government agencies and artisan food producers was highlighted as a recommendation to address the issue, along with the need for better streamlining and alignment across these various departments, including their policies, processes and procedures, in order to provide the right supports to enable them to be successful. Treated within this framework similar to big

business, when arguably by design and classification they are not (FSAI, 2015), the findings raise the question as to whether they are truly valued for their contribution to food and food in tourism or instead whether this value is overshadowed by the government's pursuit of broader economic aims, namely exports and attracting direct foreign investment. The findings also showed that there appears to be a lack of knowledge and awareness of Irish food history and culture by people in some of these agency positions that ideally needs to be addressed from an education perspective in order for the environment within which the artisan food producer operates to be fully understood on a broad level, that encompasses their multifaceted role in food and food in tourism on the one hand, and Ireland's foodways on the other. Integral to local economies (Csath, 2021) is conceivably why they are integrated into various food and food in tourism strategies (Fáilte Ireland, 2018; DAFM, 2015), so unnecessary inflexibility, bureaucracy and a disregard for artisan food producers business models as demonstrated in the findings, particularly when it appears that plenty of funding is available but just difficult to access for example, has the propensity to disenfranchise these artisan businesses, making an exit from not just the food in tourism market a risk, but also signalling a risk in terms of the impact this could have on preserving heritage, food culture, skills and agriculture, as examples, a situation that needs cross-party discussion to properly address.

4.7.3 Theme 3: The Importance of the Food in Tourism Experience:

The research question underpinning this section findings and answered here was: how important is the visitor's experience to the artisan food producer?

In line with the extant literature that sets out the importance of the food in tourism experience to the visitor (Kim et al., 2009; Sims, 2009) and with research indicating that 90% of visitors expect quality food and drink experiences whilst visiting Ireland (Fáilte Ireland, 2019), it was of interest that the research showed that providing great food in tourism experiences was also of significant importance to the artisan food producer, however, of interest here was a key finding which indicated that this provision appeared to be driven by the intrinsic motivations of the artisan food producer rather than any push or guidance from tourism agencies particularly. Additionally, in terms of the experience itself, from a co-creation perspective (Richards, 2012), artisan food producers are creating and providing multiple experience types on their own terms to satisfy visitor expectations, from novel approaches (Oysters) to translating old experiences in new ways (Cider) and embracing Ireland's evolving food

culture (Spice bags and beer), in order to provide them with memorable tourist experiences (Kim et al., 2010). The research also found that food stories and narratives were central to artisan food producers business and food in tourism proposition delivering on Fáilte Ireland's (2018) definition of what constitutes a good food in tourism experience. As food producers first, the research showed that balancing production with food in tourism is an ongoing challenge for many artisan food producers, although arguably those providing on-site experiences have through experience found the best approach for them to make it work, with other opportunities being considered and explored for the future, highlighting again a requirement for ongoing dialogue and consultation across stakeholders in order to manage the food in tourism product effectively. The findings also showed a clear link between agritourism and food tastings on the farm, absent from the agritourism literature (Gil Arroyo et al., 2013), particularly of interest in light of the Irish government's significant focus here to provide funding as part of a post-pandemic focus to drive the economy (gov.ie, 2021), clearly recognising the artisan food producers contribution in this space.

Also discussed here was the concept of the 3rd space (Everett, 2012) which due to wide ranging health and safety regulations, often require that the food production experience is viewed from 'constructed' spaces rendering the experience inauthentic. The research found that while artisan food producers had an intrinsic sense of what authentic and inauthentic experiences were, it was not linked to any academic view and there was no sense that the artisan food producer felt that the visitor was losing out, although it did raise an interesting question as to what role the tour operator played here, another stakeholder arguably driven by profit (Klem and Parkinson, 1997), and their impact on authenticity, calling into question the dynamics of the relationship between both the artisan food producer and the tour operator specifically. Lastly, the artisan food producers' lived experience also gave them a window into the future in terms of the opportunities they recognise between what exists now and what could be, suggesting that Ireland has the wherewithal to become a food destination in its own right, if all stakeholders work together to address key challenges, with the potential for food in tourism to become a peak experience rather than just a supporting one (Quan and Wang, 2003), and this is of key importance as arguably this can only be achieved by the ongoing participation of the artisan food producers in a food in tourism role and also circles back to the requirement for consistent communication and dialogue between stakeholders to ensure that there is an awareness of Ireland's food in tourism strategy as well as an ability for food in

tourism providers to provide feedback on what's happening on the ground, in order to drive a consistent food narrative.

4.7.4 Theme 4: Against the Grain:

Utilising a phenomenological approach provided some additional themes to consider from the artisan food producers' lived experience perspective which feed into the overall research question: what are the lived experiences of artisan producers in their role as food tourism providers in food tourism in Ireland?

Three key themes were raised by a number of participants referencing their experiences of sexism, being an 'outsider' and food fraud, all of which are absent from the food in tourism literature. The issue of sexism appears in what could be labelled as traditionally male environments, and arguably as agrifood sectors evolve and artisan food producers increase, causing a generational shift, these views will rightly come under pressure but in the meanwhile it is a concern if sexist behaviour is causing a barrier to entry for women (or men) as it is difficult to manage in a non-organisational environment. Similarly, being an 'outsider' can be a difficult position to find oneself in, especially in a well-established sector where business and supporting organisations may already have strong relationships and 'cliques' that are hard to penetrate, particularly if this is impacting working conditions, pricing and sales, as examples. The findings provide a narrow view of these types of experiences and how they are experienced in the everyday by the food in tourism producer, but arguably further research is required to understand the extent of these issues, as the research only serves to reveal the issues, as a starting point.

Absent from the food tourism literature, food fraud is considered as an "illegal deception for economic gain using food" and the research found that it was in this context that the topic was raised based on the artisan food producers' lived experience on the ground. Normally considered through the lens of consumer health (Kowlaska, 2018), it was of interest that this topic emerged from the perspective of food in tourism, particularly resonant because of the artisan food producers' links to authenticity (Ibery and Kneafsey 2009; Sims, 2009), and the fact that visitors search for this authenticity when they travel because they are "dissatisfied by what they perceive as the 'inauthentic' nature of contemporary consumerism" (Soper, 2007, cited in Sims, 2009, p. 333). This raises a significant red flag and is of particular interest to those involved in promoting Ireland as a tourist destination, understanding the damage it could do to a well fought for reputation in the area of food and food tourism over the past

decades (Fáilte Ireland, 2012; 2014; 2018; DAFM, 2010; 2015), the subsequent impact to tourism revenues and future opportunities, as well as the damage to Ireland's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment, and needs to be addressed appropriately through further research.

Chapter 5 will now outline the research conclusions, offer recommendations and acknowledge the limitations of this research.

Chapter 5

5.0 Chapter 5 - Conclusion:

5.1 Introduction:

This research aimed to add the artisan food producers' voice to the literature by answering the question, what are the lived experiences of artisan producers in their role as food tourism providers in food tourism in Ireland? in order to fill a gap identified in the current research. As a food tourism provider they are a key stake holder in Ireland's food in tourism proposition, so it is important to ensure they are represented here from both a knowledge and experience perspective and utilising a phenomenological approach for the research allowed the objectives of this study to be achieved as it helped the researcher to get close to the lived experience and the professional life of the artisan food producer(s), to understand how they perceive and experience the phenomenon of food tourism, helping to bring their story to life and their perspective to the fore.

5.2 Research Context:

It is important to contextualise this research within the current covid-19 pandemic as arguably it has flavoured the artisan food producers' experiences in multiple ways. Additionally, the pandemic has also put a halt to leisure travel for the foreseeable future, and it is unlikely to gain much traction until the second half of 2021 at the earliest, based on government comments to date. However, The World Food Travel Association (WFTA) in their *State of the Food and Beverage Tourism Industry Report* suggest that local food and artisan food producers will be key to successfully rebuilding food in tourism as destinations use the down time as an opportunity to review their offerings in terms of sustainability and striking the right balance between locals and tourists, particularly as local and in-country visitors will be required for the short-term viability of businesses (Wolf, 2021), and this resonated with artisan food producers in Ireland as they considered their business models and what updates are required for them to remain viable now, and of course further prosper, once tourism is up and running again and is a good jumping off point to discuss the key conclusions of the research.

5.3 Key Conclusions:

The findings presented and discussed in detail in chapter four allow for a number of key conclusions to be drawn and are presented here.

On reflection, it is clear that while government strategies and initiatives set out the importance of the artisan food producer to food, tourism and food in tourism in Ireland, this rhetoric does not dovetail with what the artisan food producers experience on the ground when these strategies are implemented. This conclusion is based on the challenges that artisan producers experience in their dealings with multiple government departments and agencies in their everyday, where it appears that existing outside the norms places them at a disadvantage, as many policies and processes are arguably designed with 'big business' in mind. This results in considerable time and effort required on the part of the artisan food producer to get access to support(s) and funding, which is not always feasible for small businesses and the findings show that this causes considerable frustration for them on multiple levels. This is largely driven by the government's pursuit of broader economic aims as their overarching priority, and an administrative system that lacks awareness and knowledge of the artisan producer, while also being difficult to navigate, unnecessarily bureaucratic and inflexible. This knowledge is important as it provides an opportunity for government departments, agencies and policymakers to review existing structures and processes through the lens of the artisan food producer to understand what improvements can be made to remove unnecessary obstacles and challenges to build a framework that aids and promotes their success rather than impedes it.

In addition, outside of entrepreneurship underpinned by lifestyle (Tregear, 2005), the lens through which artisan food producers are usually viewed, the research concludes that there is more to the artisan food producer in terms of their motivations and values than was previously considered, uncovering a nuanced and in-depth view not currently found in the extant literature. This is important because it allows for a fuller representation of them as a key stakeholder within Ireland's food in tourism landscape, and is arguably translatable outside of Ireland too, and adds their voice and perspective to the literature. Understanding their primary focus is production and sales, with their food in tourism role as secondary, it is a useful starting point for policymakers and other stakeholders from a planning perspective, in terms of the overall quality and quantity of the food in tourism product being made available. Additionally, a clearer insight into a number of the artisan food producers' motivations, driven by passion, education, sustainability and a desire to protect Ireland's tangible and intangible culture provides a different lens for policymakers, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) and local tourism networks to consider future food in tourism strategies as it colours a number of components such as the quality of the experience

provided, as well as creative tourism opportunities, for example. The knowledge of these motivations and the findings underpinning them are also useful for other government departments such as those responsible for agriculture, heritage and education amongst others, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing and cross department collaborations with a view to enhancing not just Ireland's food in tourism product but the country's tourism proposition overall. The artisan food producers' self-driven strong link to innovation is also key as food tourism needs to be about creating the future as well as preserving the past (Richards, 2002), and this knowledge is again useful to policymakers in both the food tourism and agrifood sectors from the perspective of future planning.

Considering this knowledge then and compounded by the wide range of challenges and obstacles artisan food producers face when interacting with government agencies and departments, it is evident that what is required to address the situation is the establishment of one representative department or agency at government level. This set up would facilitate engagement and allow for consultation with artisan food producers, providing a forum for ongoing communication and dialogue, in addition to a robust mechanism for feedback, which from the research findings is currently absent. This set up would also add value from a number of angles. The first, is an opportunity to provide alignment and joined up thinking across the various bodies and agencies that engage with artisan food producers to avoid duplication of effort and minimise the time and resource required to engage. Secondly, it would facilitate an environment where all department and agencies were working together using the same playbook and removing any impact from those who may be operating in silos, facilitating co-ordinated decision making that is aligned, rather than at odds, across departments, significantly reducing conflict and confusion for the artisan food producer. Thirdly, it would facilitate a simplification of process and procedures to improve accessibility to a broad range of supports and funding. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, a focus on education and awareness for all department employees to ensure that they are fully appraised of who the artisan food producer is, that they understand their uniqueness is a valuable USP to be nurtured, as well as an understanding of Irish food history and culture and the key role that artisan food producers play on the ground in providing great food in tourism experiences, amongst others. Underpinning this arguably, is the fact that as a multi-faceted stakeholder they need to be considered holistically as a whole, rather than broken up into parts such as agrifood or agriculture or rural development or food in tourism, when in fact they most likely are a hybrid of some, or all of these, and need to be treated as such.

Additionally, a key output of this change can arguably lead to a reduction in the number of obstacles and challenges faced by artisan food producers leading to fewer frustrations, and therefore positively impacting any future risk of loss, highlighted in the findings as a key concern. This approach, as an output of the knowledge gained from the research, can be useful with a view to the long term, when we consider that based on existing academic and grey literature the artisan economy is set to grow (Fernández-Armesto, 2002), visitors will continue to seek out authentic and meaningful experiences (Sims, 2009), and government will continue to leverage tourism as an economic lever (DAFM, 2015; Fáilte Ireland, 2018), meaning the artisan food producer will remain critical to future strategies and development plans, further emphasising the need for a shift to this type of supporting model.

As well as a need then for an overarching government department or body to be set up to service and support artisan food producers more adequately, the research also supports a similar approach from the perspective of the artisan food producer as well, as arguably it would be beneficial for them to set up an official council to serve their own multifaceted needs in parallel. Collectively, there is power in numbers, so consequently it would require a broad commitment from the majority, if not all, artisan food producers, for it to be workable. And then in order to be effective, it would need to be run as a formal organisation, with clear aims and ambitions combined with defined (and paid) roles and responsibilities, similar to any formal organisation. Undoubtedly there are challenges to be considered here as to what would be required of the artisan producer to be involved, in terms of time and effort, which would need to be considered as part of the set-up. However, the payoff is that individually, or in small numbers, artisan food producers have limited power to effect change, but as an official body with the right people selected to represent them, there is an opportunity to advocate effectively for themselves as a group on a wide range of issues, as well as push back against what may be considered unfair practices or controls that disproportionately effect artisan food producers, when compared to say 'big business'. While recognising that there are a small number of artisan food producer groups in existence linked into various agencies, such as the FSAI, which is non-advisory, they remain infrequent, voluntary and arguably have little opportunity to connect more widely or do much on their own. As the artisan food producer crosses multiple touch points, it would also help to establish them as key players in various other fields such as heritage preservation and education for example, all areas linked to food in tourism but with broader implications as well. They can then participate in promoting awareness of their contribution and value to Ireland's foodscape, while also

networking and sharing knowledge and best practices internally, helping themselves. Such a body could also push communication and consultation, while in parallel hold government departments and agencies accountable to implementing strategies as agreed, and through ongoing dialogue enhance and improve them. Arguably such an approach on both sides could deliver efficiencies, speed and agility, meaning that objectives could not only be met but exceeded. It also offers a framework where issues such as sexism can be considered in the context of the broader operating environment and how best to address. Notably these are just examples of what a representative body could look like and the areas that could fall within their remit and is just a starting off point. However, while this would be a serious undertaking, and not to be taken lightly, based on the current operating environment as outlined by the lived experiences of artisan food producers, this approach is certainly worthy of consideration by both the artisan food producers and government and further research and investigation is required.

Lastly, it is important to circle back to the issue of food fraud, raised by a number of artisan food producers. This is of particular relevance when we consider that Failte Ireland's food and drink strategy is very focused on the importance of the food visitors encounter being authentic, recognising it as a symbol of place and culture. Critically, the product being authentic has also been identified as one of the key components in delivering world class food and drink experiences and therefore is integral to how we promote our food in tourism offering, and this is what is marketed overseas. Absent from the food tourism literature, this topic is of serious concern as it arguably jeopardises Ireland's food in tourism proposition and risks a reputation that has been built over the past decades, while also having a significant impact on the artisan food producer's food in tourism role, their business reputation as well as their brand. Identifying food fraud as an issue in this context is a first step and further research is required to fully understand the problem, its extent, and how to tackle it.

Considering then the current state of play, as the covid-19 pandemic continues, and with many artisan food producers in limbo until travel starts again, I would conclude that there is an opportunity to look at some issues differently, as outlined here, affording both government and artisan food producers an opportunity to mobilise and innovatively address challenges from a bottom up, local perspective, helping to shape change all the way to national level. Historically, times of great adversity tend to focus both people's creativity and entrepreneurial skills to solve issues and create opportunities in the gap between what was

and what can be and with the future indicated to be more like the past than was previously thought (Fernández-Armesto, 2002), arguably the time is now for the artisan food producer.

5.4 Recommendations:

In addition to exploring the feasibility of setting up a government department or agency designed to support the multifaceted artisan food producer more broadly as well as an artisan food producers' council, which would address a number of key areas of concern, there are a number of additional topics that would benefit from further research. Many of these have been highlighted in the discussion chapter and will be recapped simply here.

The artisan food producers' link to innovation – what plans exist currently and how will this shape the food in tourism product and experiences in the future of food in tourism in Ireland?

Food fraud in food in tourism – how big is the issue, what forms does it take, and what are the risks to food in tourism? This could be taken from the angle of the artisan food producer but also the tourist and/or other stakeholders like restaurants for example.

Preservation of heritage – the unofficial role adopted by artisan food producer', is this sustainable, what are the challenges and what are the risks?

Artisan food producer communities (Slow Food, Économusée, Euro Toques etc.) – what role do they play in food in tourism in Ireland? Are they effective? What is the level of engagement? Is their value in their awards?

5.5 Research Limitations:

While adopting a phenomenological paradigm provided a wealth of knowledge and insight from the artisan food producers interviewed, it did result in some secondary topics being omitted based on the volume of data acquired and the time available to complete the research. However, I am satisfied that the themes discussed here are the key themes from the data based on the application of thematic analysis. On further review there may be an opportunity for a piece of follow up research based on the primary data and subject to review this may be made available for research purposes.

Also of note, this research was conducted remotely during the current covid-19 pandemic, and while zoom has become central to all businesses' communication and worked well for the purposes of these interviews, it must be pointed it out that the data collected in person may well have been different. Additionally, while a research sample size of ten is statistically

relevant for a phenomenological study, and there was considerable saturation, and then convergence, identified in the analysis resulting in the key themes discussed here, similar research could yield different results, and so a broader study could be of interest.

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