

“Every brew is a challenge and every glass of a good beer is an achievement”: Home brewing and serious leisure

Abstract

This exploratory study contributes to the body of knowledge of leisure research, investigating various dimensions related to home brewing, particularly reasons for and benefits from engaging in this activity through the lens of the Serious Leisure Construct. Although evidence suggests that home brewing has increased in popularity, to date, it has received limited attention from the academic literature. The study is based on the responses of 219 home brewers in Australia. The employed content analysis and word association identified the feeling of a rewarding and enjoying experience, affordability, sharing, brewing-to-taste, and socialising opportunities as key perceived benefits. In addition, various links between the findings and the SLC were identified. Overall, the findings revealing the seemingly multifaceted nature of home brewing, which combines tangible elements such as producing the craft beer, and intangible, for instance, sharing and socialising, highlight important theoretical and practical implications for leisure involvement.

Keywords: Home brewing, reasons, perceived benefits, serious leisure construct, Australia

Introduction

Reflecting the significant growth of the commercial craft brewing industry in the last decade (Brewers Association, 2016; Beers of Europe, 2015; Cannatelli, Pedrini, and Grumo, 2015; Elzinga, Tremblay, and Tremblay, 2015; Murray, & Kline, 2015; Rogerson and Collins, 2015), home brewing is also gaining in popularity in various parts of the world (e.g., Clifton, 2016; Hill, 2016; Wells, 2015). Alone in the United States, there are more than 1.2 million home brewers (American Homebrewers Association, AHA, 2016). Also in the United States, the numbers of home brewing equipment shops and their respective sales have grown in recent years. Indeed, in 2013, there was a 24 percent increase in equipment sales, more shops selling home brewing kits, and an overall 10.3 increase in gross revenue as compared to 2012 (AHA, 2014). In Australia, the country where the present study was conducted, home brewing is practiced significantly, drawing thousands of enthusiasts (The Courier, 2017).

Murray and O'Neill (2015) defined home brewing as “a propitious blend” (p. 287) of science and art that provide extrinsic and intrinsic fulfilment. Moreover, home brewing combines aspects of rigorous science, including bacterial/microbiological control, cold filtering techniques, and fermentation processes (Murray and O'Neill, 2015). This combination demands an extensive variation of imported/indigenous ingredients, brewing methods, and personal taste (Murray and O'Neill, 2015). Thus, home brewing can be categorised as “a serious leisure activity... accessible to most people” (Murray and O'Neill, 2015, p. 285). In turn, leisure is referred to by Voss (1967) as “freedom from the disutility of work” (p. 92), and “that fraction of the day not spent working” (p. 97).

Despite the apparent rise in significance of home brewing as a leisure activity, to date only few academic studies have discussed this emerging phenomenon. Two of these studies were conducted among United States' home brewers, and are very significant to the present research. In one of them, Murray and O'Neill (2015) measure motivation and satisfaction factors for engaging in home brewing, applying Stebbins's (1992) Serious Leisure Construct (SLC). Using a list of scaled items, the authors found that creative outlet, developing skills and knowledge were main motivational factors to home brew, while engagement, enjoyment, self-accomplishment, friendship, develop skills, and 'try new things' were key satisfaction triggers. A second study (Murray and O'Neill, 2012) investigated home brewers' potential as patrons of food and beverage (F&B) businesses. Interestingly, this research revealed that

involvement in home brewing did not decrease spending outside the home. Indeed, 40.7 percent of participants acknowledged that their spending had remained the same, and 30.8 that it had increased (Murray and O'Neill, 2012).

A third study (Thurnell-Read, 2016) was conducted among members of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA, United Kingdom). Real Ale is a type of beer that contains traditional ingredients, such as yeast, malted barley, water, and hops (CAMRA, 2017a). CAMRA was established in response to the progressive replacement of Ales' rich flavours by less demanding storing and production techniques (CAMRA, 2017b). Thus, the Campaign's objectives include the promotion of pubs and Real Ales, and acting as consumers' champion (CAMRA, 2017b). Thurnell-Read's (2016) study employed the SLC to examine both benefits and costs of CAMRA membership, whereby Real Ale appreciation is one of the key activities. Apart from sensory pleasure, Real Ale appreciation also represented a long-term, meaningful leisure commitment, which required "acquiring knowledge and expertise and acting in any number of voluntary organizational roles" (Thurnell-Read, 2016, p. 80). Such involvement also provided a sense of identity, community and conviviality among CAMRA members (Thurnell-Read, 2016). However, while participants agreed that benefits outweighed costs, their involvement also entailed commitments and financial, time, and effort-related investments (Thurnell-Read, 2016).

This exploratory study will contribute to the leisure and serious leisure literature. The study will address the above-mentioned knowledge gap by examining the perceived reasons for and benefits from engaging in home brewing among a group of Australian home brewers. To help understand motivations amongst members of the participating group, and aligned with existing research (Murray and O'Neill, 2015; Thurnell-Read, 2016), Stebbins's (1982) SLC construct will be employed. By proposing a refinement of the above construct, the study also makes a theoretical contribution.

In essence, the following research questions (RQs) shall be examined:

RQ1: Why did participants become involved in home brewing?

RQ2: What are the main benefits they have gained from such involvement?

RQ2: How does the SLC contribute to a better understanding of

a) reasons for involvement in home brewing, and

b) perceived benefits from involvement in home brewing?

Literature Review

Serious leisure and the SLC

Earlier research on serious leisure by Stebbins (e.g., 1982, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2007) is critical in the context of the present exploratory study. Serious leisure, a type of general leisure, is conceptualised "as the systematic pursuit" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3) of hobbyist, volunteer, or amateur core activities sufficiently interesting or substantial for participants "to find a career... in the acquisition and expression of... special skills and knowledge" (p. 3). Serious leisure is also based on the notion that, increasingly, individuals will search "the world of leisure" (Stebbins, 1982, p. 251) as a medium to "identify themselves as unique human beings" (p. 251), fulfil their potential, or express their abilities. Stebbins's (1992) research identifies six fundamental qualities of serious leisure:

Perseverance: Activities related to serious leisure can evoke pleasant memories; however, such memories are acquired or emerge after participants have overcome adversities (Stebbins, 1992). Moreover, perseverance may be considered as the act of persisting in goal-directed

behaviours over time (Gould et al., 2008). Through perseverance, participants engaged in an activity may eventually achieve a certain level of proficiency (Thurnell-Read, 2016).

Leisure career: The tendency among hobbyists, volunteers, or amateurs to have leisure careers shaped by enduring activities with stages of involvement, achievement, or turning points (Stebbins, 1992). In other words, some chosen activities may be enduring or meaningful to practitioners (Murray and O'Neill, 2015). Stages of involvement illustrate “a continuum of changing patterns” (Gould et al., 2008, p. 49) associated with knowledge, abilities, or skills. Therefore, leisure career can also be interpreted as the stage of developing one's skills and abilities (Thurnell-Read, 2016); it is a passage or a personal journey “in a leisure role” (Gould et al., 2008, p. 49).

Effort: Careers in serious leisure often demand the investment of significant personal efforts, for instance, while training, gaining special skills, and knowledge (Gould et al., 2008; Stebbins, 1992). Furthermore, characteristics such as verbal skills, scientific knowledge, length of experience in a particular role, and especially persistent effort, help distinguish hobbyists or amateurs from the general public (Stebbins, 1992).

Durable benefits/outcomes: This quality derives from assessing the cost and benefits related to engaging in serious leisure lifestyles (Gould et al., 2008). Stebbins (1992) identifies eight such benefits: self-enrichment, self-actualisation, belongingness, social interaction, enhancement of self-image, feelings of accomplishment, lasting physical products of the undertaken activities, and self-expression.

Unique ethos: According to Stebbins (2007), “An ethos is the spirit of the community of serious leisure participants” (p. 12). Thus, serious leisure practitioners undertake their interests within their own social world (Stebbins, 1992). Because of the previously identified four qualities, participants or practitioners (e.g., volunteers, hobbyists, and amateurs) are likely to develop subcultures based on specific values, norms, or performance standards (Stebbins, 1992, 2007). Similarly, as interpreted by Thurnell-Read (2016) unique ethos may “develop around serious leisure activities where context-specific terminology, meanings, and values are likely to demarcate the community of practitioners from nonpractitioners” (p. 70).

Identify: Practitioners of serious leisure are likely to identify very strongly with their chosen leisure activities (Stebbins, 2007). Indeed, they may frequently speak about these pursuits, and in an excited, proud manner to other individuals, sometimes even too enthusiastically, or may also introduce themselves to other people by referring to these pursuits (Stebbins, 1992). Thus, serious leisure demands a strong degree of commitment, for instance, in terms of time, effort, or intensity.

Despite suggested weaknesses, or new perspectives to be considered (e.g., Scott, 2012; Veal, 2016), the SLC has various associations within the context of home brewing that justify its implementation in the present study. For instance, home brewing arguably demands a process of experimentation, trial and error, commitment, dedication and learning, whereby adepts must first invest in equipment and other resources to start their activity.

In addition, academic studies investigating various leisure activities with a similar creative and/or hands-on focus, demands, and both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards have referred to the serious leisure literature in various contexts. Regarding the creative and/or hands-on focus of serious leisure, Cox and Blake (2011) provided a discussion of Stebbins's work (e.g., 1992) when they examined serious leisure in the context of seeking, creating,

managing and sharing information by food bloggers based in the United Kingdom. The authors found that, as a leisure pursuit, food blogging led to creating new information sources, which demanded bloggers' inspiration, in maximising existing information. Furthermore, the style and content of food blogs, was shaped by the degree of involvement, namely, in an amateur, public, or professional system (Cox and Blake, 2011).

Also related to creativity and hands-on experiences, Hartel's (2010)'s investigation, which sought to describe ways in which gourmet cooking hobbyists managed the gathered culinary information at home, also presented the SLC, considering the work of Stebbins (2001). Hartel (2010) noticed that the more enthusiastic participants developed a personal culinary library (PCL), a collection of information sources. These sources were predominantly based in the homes of gourmet cooks, and included various upkeep activities, such as those of household artifacts.

Concerning demands and extrinsic/intrinsic rewards, and as previously presented, Thurnell-Read's (2016) research on Real Ale enthusiasts and CAMRA members significantly drew from Stebbins's research (e.g., 1997). Indeed, the author emphasised the significance of acquiring expertise and knowledge for those involved in Real Ale appreciation. This activity, which can demand time and financial investments, can also help build a sense of identity, particularly from membership of the Campaign for Real Ale (Thurnell-Read, 2016). Moreover, apart from offering a sense of identity, as a Real Ale consumer and member, there are numerous opportunities to attend beer related events, which can help build a sense of conviviality and community (Thurnell-Read, 2016). Conversely, these elements bestow personal and social benefits on the participants (Thurnell-Read, 2016).

Similarly, Murray and O'Neill's (2015) examination of home brewers, which considered Stebbins's (1982) framework, associated home brewing with a number of intrinsic rewards, such as social aspects, most notably association/club membership, product sampling and competitions. Furthermore, while home brewing can be a source of membership and socialisation, Murray and O'Neill (2015) also stated that this activity "can be a solitary quest for creation and perfection, providing internalization and inner dialogue, the chance to commune with oneself" (p. 285). Moreover, the authors refer to the extrinsic and intrinsic "impetus that exists dichotomously within... home brewing" (p. 285).

Complementing the above contributions, the present study is concerned with various aspects related to individuals' involvement in serious leisure. Fundamentally, the study examines motivations to become involved in home brewing; in addition, participants' perceived benefits from such involvement are also explored. In order to guide the research and the understanding of the above motivations and perceived benefits, the SLC will be adopted.

Methods

This exploratory study investigates perceived motivations and benefits from engaging in home brewing through the lens of the SLC; to this end, the perceptions of home brewers are gathered. Thus, the study seeks to contribute to the leisure literature on a growing activity that to date is still under-researched. To study home brewers, a decision was made to select those based in Australia as potential participants. One fundamental reason for this choice was the stronger awareness and understanding of the craft brewing and home brewing industries in this country among members of the research team. Indeed, one of the authors' background knowledge of home brewers in one of Australia's states contributed to identifying various home brewing clubs throughout the country. In addition, a literature review conducted identified no previous academic leisure studies conducted among Australian home brewers. Finally, the fact that members of the research team were based in Australia, which allowed to

maintain more affordable and straightforward communication with home brewing clubs in different states further supported the decision to conduct the study in this country.

Subsequently, in April of 2015, email contact was established with six different home brewing clubs. Given that no direct access was granted to contact individual home brewers, a decision was made to use an online questionnaire, and provide the brewing clubs with the URL link for them to disseminate the message and link among their members. At the outset of the study, there was awareness of some of the pitfalls of employing this data collection method, including low response rates (Aitken, Power, and Dwyer, 2008; Fan and Yan, 2010). However, because of the difficulties that prevented the identification of individual home brewers across Australia, both gathering data through and online questionnaire and depending on home brewer clubs' effective dissemination of the message and questionnaire link were perceived as the most appropriate forms to carry out the study.

The questionnaire for this study was broken down into three sections, with the first gathering participants' demographic information (e.g., age group, gender, and years of home brewing). The second section sought to ascertain the reasons for participants to become involved in home brewing, while the third section sought to identify the main perceived benefits they gained. In the absence of existing research on home brewers employing the SLC at the time the study was conducted, and given the exploratory nature of the research, it was decided to use open-ended questions in sections two and three.

Initially, home brewing clubs' representatives were asked to send a message to their members. The message summarised the objectives of the research, and provided the URL link to access and complete the online questionnaire. Subsequently, between April and June of 2015, three reminders were sent to the clubs, so that they could inform their members. By the end of June, 219 usable responses from home brewers were received.

To analyse the predominantly textual data in this research, qualitative content analysis (QCA) and word association were employed. QCA is one among many ways of analysing textual data (Forman and Damschroder, 2008; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Essentially, QCA is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). In QCA, data are grouped employing categories that are created, at least partly, inductively, that is, resulting (Forman and Damschroder, 2008), or gradually acquired from the data (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, 2000). Thus, QCA can help reduce the amount of data; it requires from researchers to focus on particular aspects of meaning, those "that relate to the overall research question" (Schreier, 2014, p. 170).

Word association is also a qualitative research method, which involves presenting individuals "with a target stimulus and asking them to provide the first thoughts or images that come to mind" (Roininen, Arvola, & Lähteenmäki, 2006, p. 21). In this study, such stimulus was represented by both the question asking reasons for becoming involved in home brewing, and the question regarding perceived benefits from home brewing.

The sequence in which the different patterns of responses emerged allowed for quantifying this part of the findings. For example, in the case of reasons for involvement in home brewing (Table 2), the images or thoughts emerging from participants' comments were identified through word association. Subsequently, the numerous comments highlighting such images/thoughts among the 219 participants were quantified. To illustrate their significance, these responses were then ranked from highest to lowest in number.

The data management software NVivo (10) served as an assisting tool through the analysis process. Whenever applicable, in the following sections selected verbatim comments will be provided; these comments will be abbreviated (e.g., Participant 1: P1).

Concerning the data collection process, the lists of home brewing club members, as well as the approximate number of these members in all clubs were not shared by the six home brewing clubs. For this reason, it was not possible to estimate a response rate between messages of invitation sent and actual participants in this study. Furthermore, given the thousands of home brewers across Australia (The Courier, 2017), the overall findings, which are based on responses of 219 home brewers, should be treated with caution.

Demographic results

Overall, in this study home brewing is predominantly practiced by people of ages between 26 and 45 years; 69.9 percent of participants fell under this age range (Table 1). Almost all respondents (98.6%) were male. Participants had different occupations, with nearly half (46.4%) working in the fields of engineering and information technology, in government jobs, in management or self-employed. Most participants (70.4%) were living in the states of Victoria and Western Australia, and over three-fourths in a capital city. Finally, almost half of participants (47.5%) had been brewing for five years or less, and the large majority (70.3%) brewed less than 1000 litres of beer yearly.

Table 1 Here

Results

RQ1: Reasons for home brewing

Through QCA and word association several emerging themes were revealed. Over one-third of participations perceived home brewing as an affordable way to make beer. This finding to some extent aligns with recent research by Murray and O'Neill (2015), where the general affordability of this activity was suggested. However, as the following comments underline, for some participants such thoughts were primarily at the outset of their involvement. As the level of intensity in home brewing grew, so did their interest, knowledge, and preparedness to invest more resources, including time, effort, or even financial investments:

P1: *Originally it was for good cheap beer, but only ended up being cheap beer.*

Now, it's good, (not so) cheap beer...

P2: *To save money initially. But since I moved to all grain brewing, to make better beer.*

P3: *Initially to produce cheap beer; however, as I progressed, and my palate developed, I started producing beers that were superior in flavour to many that could be bought commercially.*

P4: *For me it started as a cheaper way to have beer. But then you learn about the how, why, what and when of beer. And you start to read books on brewing and building brewing rigs and yeast farming and so on...*

Table 2 Here

Additional emerging themes were equally associated with the home brewing process. Interest in brewing, for instance, appeared to a major motivator. This interest was also reflected in participants' recognised efforts to increase the variety of flavours and tastes they could consume, often unavailable at their location. Further, there were perceived gains in quality, departing from perceived homogeneity, blandness and lack of creativity in existing commercial products they were used to consuming. One among many comments was symptomatic of the perceived prevailing standards in beer quality (P5): *"I can't stomach the commercial standard stuff out there anymore."* As the following additional comments

underline, these standards, coupled with taste-related and experimenting reasons, were strong motivators to begin home brewing, as well as in further engaging in this activity:

P6: To make beer styles that were unavailable in Australia at the time / fun hobby...

P7: Normal beer did nothing; it all tasted the same, and the cost for what you got... So I decided to try brewing my own beer...

P8: For fun and interest in processes. To replicate my favourites at first but now I create my own versions and spins on them.

P9: To make beer exactly the way I want it, to understand more about brewing and tasting beer...

P10: Unimpressed with Australian 'mainstream' beers compared to UK 'Real-Ales' I was used to.

The importance of social ties, and the influence by colleagues and significant others, including by receiving a brewing kit as a gift also emerged as important motivational or encouraging factors to commit to home brewing:

P11: I started brewing as my father used to brew... and just the love of making it myself.

P12: A good friend led me astray when I was very young. He started so he could make cheap beer. I didn't mind his samples, so I started doing kit and kilo. I have never looked back, especially after joining a local club.

P13: From a young age, I loved watching my grandfather brew and serve his own beer to family when they visited.

At the same time, the comments of P11 and to some extent P13 also highlight the element of 'solitary quest' Murray and O'Neill (2015) referred to in regards to serious leisure endeavours. For example, there was an intention to develop creativity, while P12's reference to 'not looking back' also underline a sense of personal engagement with home brewing, which was then shared with other home brewers.

An extension of both taking up the challenge of home brewing and progressing from another leisure activity, such as home cooking, was also noticed. Other participants' serious leisure involvement was even more pronounced; indeed, these individuals appeared to on a different, much more intense, learning and experimenting journey, and suggested the possibility to further progress into a career:

P14: I love good beer and wanted to explore whether I would enjoy making it, perhaps professionally.

P15: To gain experience in 'All grain' brewing with the hopes of opening my own microbrewery.

These last comments underscore the progression of serious leisure into more challenging endeavours and goals, and again, illustrate the search for 'perfection' indicated by Murray and O'Neill (2015). In this context, inner dialogue, internalization, and communing with oneself, while still associated with intrinsic rewards, also represent the foundation for participants to elevate the intensity of their serious leisure activity into extrinsic (commercial) rewards.

RQ2: Perceived benefits from home brewing

While four benefits emerged as more predominant, with the largest group (44.3%) identifying home brewing as a rewarding experience, overall, participants indicated a wide range of perceived benefits, with nearly three-fourths evoking at least one (Table 3). P16's comment, for instance, illustrates the level of absorption, competency and commitment to serious leisure. This participant referred to the creative aspect, and the completion of the brewing process, where personal fulfilment was the ultimate reward: *"I make styles that are not easily available here. Every brew is a challenge and every glass of a good beer is an achievement."* To other respondents, home brewing simultaneously meant intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards, first, completing the process, which, apart from beer and taste also entailed enjoyment, and the opportunity to share the final product:

P17: *I love brewing; such a rewarding hobby. Sharing it with friends, family and at events. It keeps me busy. It's very affordable. You gain scientific knowledge.*

P18: *The pleasure of making and tasting what I enjoy drinking; the pleasure of making beer that friends and family really enjoy; the enjoyment of a hobby which I'm actually good at and want to keep doing...*

Complementing these comments, the following also illustrate the perceived importance of home brewing for socialising and building relationships:

P19: *I enjoy the social and comradery aspect of brewing beer; it has a great interaction and ability the bring people together in a mutual way. There is a lot to be learned from just sitting and talking over beer in general...*

P20: *I am a member of a great community of like-minded people.*

P21: *Assisting others with refining their brewing skills. General community involvement that develops when brewing beer is involved.*

P22: *... brewing beer is a marriage of science and creativity. Sharing my beers with others and seeing their reaction when I tell them that I made it is rewarding.*

The above comments, that strongly emphasise the importance of togetherness, socialising, and sharing, align with contemporary research conducted in other serious leisure and mixed serious leisure activities in Australia. Indeed, Cheng, Stebbins, and Packer (2016) found that, through membership in a gardening club, the more adept or serious gardeners found an outlet to learn from one another, share experiences, or develop friendships with other individuals sharing the same passion. Earlier, Bendle and Patterson (2009) studied amateur artist groups in the state of Queensland. They noticed that group membership led to various social and personal rewards, including self-enrichment, feelings of belongingness and accomplishment, contributing to group development, and self-actualisation.

Table 3

Similar to the reasons for involvement in home brewing, affordability emerged as a key benefit, with over one-fourth of responses. However, in stark contrast to this more commonly perceived reason, the commitment of other respondents appeared to be increasing to a point where many acknowledged that saving money by home brewing was part of the past. Instead, the stronger involvement, and even sophistication, of these individuals revealed a preparedness to make more financial commitments:

P23: *I think with equipment costs and time it's certainly not as cost effective or convenient as buying beer but the process is its own reward.*

P24: *...Definitely not a money saver. Always buying new brew toys. Cost per litre would be outrageous by now.*

P25: *Money saved on producing home brew is offset by the new additions to the brewery.*

P26: *...Saving money is not really a consideration, making quality beer is.*

P27: *I can't say I spend less money because of all the equipment I buy.*

P28: *...I probably spend more money on home brew gear than I used to on beer though...*

Also, and in line with Murray and O'Neill (2012), the interest and desire to make new discoveries, for instance, developing or experimenting with flavours or styles, motivated some participants to make additional investments (P29): *"...I do save money brewing my own beer but still buy craft beers regularly."* This and the above comments strongly suggest the commercial potential of home brewers. Such potential includes patronising F&B establishments to taste new products, learn about new trends and processes, compare their products with those of established commercial brands, or, as the level of competency increases, purchasing equipment and raw products in specialised shops.

Discussion

RQ3: The SLC, motivations and perceived benefits of home brewing

For the most part, strong associations between the findings and the adopted theoretical framework emerged; based on these associations, a refinement the SLC in the context of home brewing is proposed (Figure 1). First, the following sections discuss the alignments between the findings and the different qualities of the SLC proposed by Stebbins (1992):

Perseverance: As the overall findings and some comments suggest (e.g., P16), home brewing is a learning and also a demanding process, a learning curve largely based on countless efforts and investments, as well as on trial and error. Thus, perseverance fits within the home brewing context. Moreover, serious leisure appears to be influenced by constant self-imposed rigour, which nevertheless represents enjoyment/fun, and may result in improved final products, or the feeling of accomplishment.

Leisure career: In line with Stebbins (1992), different stages of turning points, achievements or involvement shape home brewers' leisure career. Moreover, as suggested by Gould et al. (2008), Murray and O'Neill (2015), Thurnell-Read (2016), leisure career is also influenced by the meaningfulness of the activity; it is a progression demanding the development of skills, knowledge and/or abilities, and it represents a passage in acquiring a leisure role. Respondents' perseverance, added to their passion and love for home brewing contributes to further developing their hobby into a leisure career. For a minority (e.g., P14, P15), this path may evolve into a commercial opportunity.

Effort: This quality was for instance illustrated in many home brewers' perceptions that home brewing was no longer about making beers in an affordable manner. Moreover, their acknowledged continuous financial investments to procure equipment, products and materials further demonstrate sacrifices to make improvements or increase involvement in the chosen activity. Effort is also strongly related to perseverance, in refining, testing, as well as in

acquiring and exchanging information to improve or gain more from their brewing pursuits. Indeed, Murray and O'Neill (2015) underlines both perseverance and investments as part of brewers' path in gaining competency.

Durable benefits/outcomes: Many of the comments gathered in the study identify various durable benefits highlighted by Stebbins (1992). For example, bearing in mind public health concerns regarding the potential harms that irresponsible alcohol consumption may cause (e.g., Rosenthal et al., 2017), overall, the findings highlighted various intrinsic benefits for participants. Such benefits included feelings of accomplishment (achievement), competency in home brewing, social interactions, self-enrichment, belongingness, and self-expression.

Unique ethos: Based on Stebbins's (2007) definition, the perceived comradery among some groups of home brewers (e.g., P19's comment), particularly illustrated through socialising and also sharing the beer products, seem to fit within the realm of unique ethos. Moreover, the spirit of a community of home brewers is arguably a powerful element, and a key factor for this and other groups to become, either intentionally or intentionally, a subculture. In line with Stebbins (1992) and Thurnell-Read (2016) a subculture entails prescribing to certain written as well as unwritten values, terminologies, performance standards, or norms.

Identify: Comparable to the qualities of unique ethos and leisure career, and in agreement with Stebbins (2007), home brewers appear to have a strong identity with their chosen activity. Such identity is also reflected in the perceived comradery many participants indicated, as well as through sharing and socialising.

The different qualities (SLC) have important implications for leisure in general, and specifically for serious leisure. For example, and as identified in the research, there are cost and benefit implications, particularly in completing the personal journey (Gould et al., 2008). More importantly, there are implications concerning the ultimate objectives of the path or journey, which include extrinsic, as well as intrinsic rewards. Moreover, aligned with Gould et al. (2008), Murray and O'Neill (2015), and Stebbins (1992), the journey first involves developing skills. Second, the journey also entails a process of gaining confidence, competence, product consistency, and third, sharing and socialising, which also implies both giving and receiving knowledge, further illuminating and enhancing participants' home brewing experience.

Conclusions

Despite the apparent growth of home brewing, and the strong links between this activity and serious leisure, very few studies have focused on this dimension. The main purpose of this exploratory study was contribute to the leisure activity, and partly address this knowledge gap. Thus, the study examined the reasons for home brewers to become involved in this activity, and benefits gained from such involvement through the scope of the SLC. The overall findings revealed the importance of affordability of home brewing as compared to buying commercial products. At the same time, enjoyment, interest also emerged as key reasons, as did the opportunity to seek variety and produce quality products not available at participants' location. The aspect of affordability also emerged as one significant benefit from home brewing. However, and fundamentally, hedonism in the form of enjoyment completing home brewing processes, the feeling of achievement, and the opportunity to share and socialise were main perceived benefits.

Various associations between the employed theoretical frameworks and the findings emerged. Regarding the SCL, all six qualities of serious leisure proposed by Stebbins (1992)

were confirmed. For instance, perseverance was illustrated through learning processes and challenging one self, leisure career through the personal journey of the brewing process, and effort through participants' preparedness to make financial and other investments to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Implications

The multifaceted nature of home brewing, where such tangible elements as the final beer product, quality improvements, and variety of styles/flavours are complemented by intangible, particularly hedonism, sense of achievement, intrinsic rewards, and community building, suggests various key implications. One fundamental practical implication is the importance of sharing and socialising that, according to many comments, appears to exist within the home brewing community. These aspects could contribute to enrich many individuals' lives, finding purpose and more meaningfulness, and being a source of personal satisfaction. Murray and O'Neill (2015) conclude that serious leisure deriving in satisfaction could be useful in the development of activities and programs that add to participants' quality of life.

From a commercial perspective, and complemented by figures from the AHA (2014), some of the findings underscore implications for suppliers, providers, and buyers of home brewing equipment. Indeed, various comments referred to the social aspect and the personal rewards of home brewing (e.g., P13-P22), as well as to the need to update home brewing equipment almost constantly despite the costs (e.g., P23-P28). These comments indicate that many individuals do intensify their involvement in home brewing, and are prepared to make at times substantial investments to progress and excel in their home brewing endeavours. Such interest and involvement, illustrated in their financial investment, could contribute to more supply-demand exchanges and transactions, with resulting socioeconomic impacts for suppliers and providers of home brewing equipment in cities or regions.

From a theoretical perspective, incorporating the SLC facilitated the association of empirical findings and theory, and contributed to a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of craft brewing. The illustrated alignment between findings and theory (Figure 1) confirms the usefulness of the SLC in providing a lens that guides the process of identifying such multifaceted serious leisure activity. Thus, this theoretical framework allows for a more thorough and rigorous examination of motivations and benefits from engaging in home brewing, and potentially in other serious leisure activities with similar characteristics, including level of involvement, overcoming challenges, or sharing, reciprocating, and socialisation. Another implication is the potential for combining the proposed refinement (Figure 1) with existing measurements to study practitioners' motivations and perceived benefits, for instance, complementing those presented by Murray and O'Neill (2015).

Limitations and Future Research

While this exploratory study provides some useful empirical and theoretical findings, it also presents various limitations. For example, although 219 responses were gathered, it is acknowledged that many more home brewers may exist across Australia, and therefore the number of participants may still be modest. Similarly, although unbeknownst to the authors, there may also be other home brewing clubs operating in the country. Thus, even when part of the findings appears to align with those of one of the few studies conducted to date (Murray and O'Neill, 2015), they should be treated with caution regarding broad generalisations about home brewers in Australia or elsewhere. In addition, the study lacks a cross-country comparative component, in that the data were only collected from Australian home brewers.

Clearly, the above limitations, and the fact that very little research has been conducted on home brewers, present various future research opportunities. Future research could, for instance, gather data through both online, and interviews, including interviews with members of brewing clubs. Such data would complement that of home brewers, as well as provide insights from individuals who may also possess the knowledge and experience regarding the growth and any significant changes occurring in this serious leisure activity. Studies could also be conducted among home brewers located in neighbouring countries, for instance, in both Australia and New Zealand. This type of research would allow for comparisons, for confirming/disconfirming previous research, or some behavioural patterns or phenomena emerging in the study, and overall, enhance the contribution of the study. The further adoption of the SLC, together or in combination with other theoretical frameworks (e.g., theory of planned behaviour, social exchange theory) could also contribute to more rigorous research, and to theory development or refinement.

References

- AHA (2016). About the AHA. Retrieved from <https://www.homebrewersassociation.org/>
- AHA (2014). American Homebrewers Association: Homebrew sales hop 10 percent in 2013. Available at: https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/shopsurvey_2014/
- Aitken, C., Power, R., & Dwyer, R. (2008). A very low response rate in an on-line survey of medical practitioners. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 32(3), 288-289.
- Bendle, L. J., & Patterson, I. (2009). Mixed serious leisure and grassroots organizational capacity: A study of amateur artist groups in a regional Australian city. *Leisure Sciences*, 31(3), 272-286.
- Brewers Association (2016). Number of breweries. Retrieved from <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/number-of-breweries/>
- Brewers of Europe (2015). Beer statistics – 2015 edition. Retrieved from http://www.brewersofeurope.org/uploads/mycms-files/documents/publications/2015/statistics_2015_v3.pdf
- CAMRA (2017a). About Real Ale. Retrieved from <http://www.camra.org.uk/about-real-ale>
- CAMRA (2017b). What is CAMRA? Retrieved from <http://www.camra.org.uk/what-is-camra>
- Cannatelli, B., Pedrini, M., & Grumo, M. (2015). The effect of brand management and product quality on firm performance: The Italian craft brewing sector. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, forthcoming.
- Cheng, E., Stebbins, R., & Packer, J. (2016). Serious leisure among older gardeners in Australia. *Leisure Studies*, forthcoming.
- Clifton, K. (2016). Homebrew shop moves into bigger premises – as craze gains popularity. Nottingham Post online. Retrieved from <http://www.nottinghampost.com/cheers-home-ales-head-boomtime/story-28564169-detail/story.html>
- Cox, A. M., & Blake, M. K. (2011). Information and food blogging as serious leisure. In P. Willett (Ed.), *Aslib Proceedings*, 63(2/3), 204-220.
- Elzinga, K. G., Tremblay, C. H., & Tremblay, V. J. (2015). Craft beer in the United States: History, numbers, and geography. *Journal of Wine Economics*, 10(3), 242-274.
- Fan, W., & Yan, Z. (2010). Factors affecting response rates of the web survey: A systematic review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(2), 132-139.
- Forman, J., & Damschroder, L. (2008). Qualitative content analysis. *Advances in Bioethics*, Volume 11, 39–62.

- Gould, J., Moore, D., McGuire, F., & Stebbins, R. (2008). Development of the serious leisure inventory and measure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 40(1), 47–68.
- Hartel, J. (2010). Managing documents at home for serious leisure: a case study of the hobby of gourmet cooking. *Journal of Documentation*, 66(6), 847-874.
- Hill, M. (2016). Home brewing popularity soars. Stuff online. Retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/food-wine/drinks/78267931/Home-brewing-popularity-soars>
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Murray, A., & Kline, C. (2015): Rural tourism and the craft beer experience: factors influencing brand loyalty in rural North Carolina, USA. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 23(8-9), 1198-1216.
- Murray, D., & O'Neill, M. (2015). Home brewing and serious leisure: exploring the motivation to engage and the resultant satisfaction derived through participation. *World Leisure Journal*, 57(4), 284-296.
- Murray, D. W., & O'Neill, M. A. (2012). Craft beer: penetrating a niche market. *British Food Journal*, 114(7), 899-909.
- Pope, C., Ziebland, S., & Mays, N. (2000). Qualitative research in health care. Analysing qualitative data. *British Medical Journal*, 320(7227), 114–116.
- Rogerson, C. M., & Collins, K. J. (2015). Beer tourism in South Africa: Emergence and contemporary directions. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 24(3/4), 241-258.
- Roininen, K., Arvola, A., & Lähteenmäki, L. (2006). Exploring consumers' perceptions of local food with two different qualitative techniques: Laddering and word association. *Food Quality and Preference*, 17(1), 20-30.
- Rosenthal, A. I., Mayott, L., Lyons, D. J., Providence, K., Scott, A., Smart, Y., & Katz, C. L. (2017). Community effect of alcoholism: a photovoice study in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 88(3), 423-434.
- Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 170-183). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Scott, D. (2012). Serious leisure and recreation specialization: An uneasy marriage. *Leisure Sciences*, 34(4), 366-371.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2007). *Serious leisure: A perspective for our time*. Edison, NJ: Aldine Transaction Publications.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2001). The costs and benefits of hedonism: Some consequences of taking casual leisure seriously. *Leisure Studies*, 20(4), 305-309.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1997). Casual leisure: A conceptual statement. *Leisure studies*, 16(1), 17-25.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1992). Amateurs, professionals, and serious leisure. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25(2), 251-272.
- The Courier (2017). Narrabri to host huge home brewing event. The Courier online. Retrieved from <http://www.thecourier.net.au/news/narrabri-to-host-huge-home-brewing-event/>
- Thurnell-Read, T. (2016). 'Real ale' enthusiasts, serious leisure and the costs of getting 'too serious' about beer. *Leisure Sciences*, 38(1), 68-84.
- Veal, A. J. (2016). The Serious Leisure Perspective and the Experience of Leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, forthcoming.
- Wells, J. (2015). How Britain became hooked on homebrew. The Telegraph online. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/11803139/How-Britain-became-hooked-on-homebrew.html>