

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Harnessing Mutuality:

The Social Capital of Club Experience

A Framework for Examining Social Dynamics of Community Clubs

A dissertation submitted by

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between club experience and the social capital of club patrons in order to address the simplistic view that community clubs are just liquor and gaming venues. It develops the Club Analytical Model to capture the multidimensional nature of the two constructs and to guide the interrogation and assessment of the relationship through correlation, regression, and thematic analysis. Based on the mixed methods design, data on club experience (patronisation of club facilities, participation in club services, and perception of club values) and social capital (structural interface, relational interface, and cognitive interface) was collected through a survey of club patrons, focus group discussions with club patrons and officials, and consultations with key club industry stakeholders. The findings were integrated using the conceptual tools of field, habitus, and capital, which enabled an in-depth exploration of the social world of community clubs. They reveal a strong and positive relationship between club experience and the social capital of club patrons, and this is generally evident in various club types and club activities. The relationship between club experience and the social capital of club patrons is moderated by admission status of club patrons and length of association with community clubs but not by gender, age, marital status, language, education, and employment of club patrons. The cohesive body of empirical evidence suggests that social dynamics go beyond participation in liquor and gaming services to harnessing social and psychological connections that exist between clubs and their patrons. The study makes significant conceptual and methodological advancements to the literature on mutuality by drawing attention to micro-processes and the pragmatic manner in which they can be studied in community clubs. Overall, the study has policy and practice implications for a range of stakeholders through the promotion of a better understanding of community clubs as a form of social enterprise that exist for the collective benefit of their members.

Certification

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor/s

Date

Acknowledgements

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Aesop (2012)

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Abbreviations and Meaning of Key Terms

Board or Management Committee	refers to the governing authority of community clubs. The term ‘management committee’ is used for a club that is registered as an incorporated association, while ‘board’ is used for a club that is registered as a company limited by guarantee. As corporate governance obligations of the management committee and the board are similar, the two terms are often used interchangeably. (See ‘registration’ below).
Club Activity	refers to various recreational pursuits available through community clubs. The study identifies eight club activities: gaming, bar, food, subclub, socialisation, music, greater good, and other (open category).
Club Experience	refers to the pursuit of common interests through the use of facilities and services provided by community clubs. Club experience has been measured in three ways for the purpose of the study: patronisation of club facilities, participation in club activities, and perception of club values.
Club Patrons	refers to people who visit community clubs for recreation. They can be members, guests of members, bona fide visitors, or other defined persons.
Club Type	refers to the orientation of community clubs, as per their main purpose. The study identifies eight club types: Returned Services Leagues Clubs (RSL Clubs), Surf Life Saving Supporters Clubs (SLSS Clubs), Bowls Clubs, Golf Clubs, Football Clubs, Multisports Clubs, Cultural Clubs, and Recreational Clubs. Recreational Clubs is an open category that includes clubs that cater for diverse interests such as workers interests and hobbies, which cannot be readily placed in the other club types.
Community Club	refers to an incorporated association or a company limited by guarantee, which holds liquor and gaming machine licences under Queensland laws. While a community club can exist informally and without a liquor or gaming machine licence, the emphasis on formal registration (see ‘registration’ below) and liquor and gaming machine licences are to ensure clubs in the sample of the study offer the full range of facilities and services referred to in the research questions. ‘Clubs’ and ‘community clubs’ are used interchangeably in the study.
Common Interest	refers to recreational interests such as sporting activities; social and leisure pursuits such as gaming; special interests such as fishing; professional identification such as workers’ socialisation; and similar themes in club operation. Common interests represent collective interests of club patrons. Common interests determine recreational interests.
Constitution	refers to the governing rules of a community club, as approved by members and registered with the relevant government agency. The constitution outlines a range of matters such as member’s rights and privileges. It is based on the Model Rules, which apply by default and set

	minimum standards; hence, the constitution represents a customisation of the Model Rules to a club's specific operating parameters. 'Constitution', 'modal rules' and 'rules' are used interchangeably in the study.
Group Difference	refers to a comparison of two or more groups within a factor, for instance, males and females for the factor of gender, or Year 12 or less and Post Year 12 for the factor of education. The study focuses on eight factors: admission status, gender, age, marital status, language, education, employment, and length of association with community clubs.
Key Club Industry Stakeholders	refers to regulatory and industry authorities that oversee the operation of community clubs. The two key club industry stakeholders, identified for the purpose of the study, are the Queensland Government's Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR) and the peak industry association and union of employers, Clubs Queensland (ClubsQld). The latter is the researcher's employer.
Laws	refers to four pieces of legislation that have the most impact on community clubs. They are the <i>Associations Incorporation Act 1981</i> (Qld), <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cwlth), <i>Gaming Machine Act 1991</i> (Qld), and the <i>Liquor Act 1992</i> (Qld).
Local Community	refers to people who live within a 15 kilometre distance (by road) to a club. This distance requirement is a legislative restriction that deems (by default) any person whose usual place of residence is beyond 15 km from the club as a visitor. The 15 km 'rule' aligns with the requirements of community clubs to predominantly exist for the benefit of their members. Notwithstanding this, clubs can admit people, irrespective of where they reside, as temporary members but this class of membership expires after a set timeframe for which it is made available under the club constitution, thus reinforcing the paramountcy of members' rights and privileges.
Registration	refers to the legal framework of community clubs. A club can register as an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act or as a company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act. Registration gives a community club formal status as an entity that is separate from its members. Registration is a prerequisite for full liquor and gaming machine licences.
Social Capital	refers to resources in social interactions of club patrons such as trust, networks, and shared meanings that can be harnessed for a benefit or advantage. Social capital has been measured in three ways for the purpose of the study: structural interface, relational interface, and cognitive interface.
Social Dynamics	refers to the interactions that club patrons have with each other as they pursue and promote their common interests in community clubs.

Paramountcy of Members' Interests

*No member shall be entitled to any benefit or advantage from the club that is not shared equally by every member thereof, provided however, that honoraria may be paid to members in appreciation of services, provided the same has been recommended by Board, and approved by resolution of the Club at the Annual General Meeting.**

Clause 38(e) of the Constitution & By-Laws of the Killarney Bowls Club (2010)

*An example of a constitutional clause that establishes the paramountcy of members' interests over club operation. Many community clubs use the same or similar wordings to illustrate this overarching goal of their operation in their club rules or constitution. Sections 2.4, 4.3.1, 4.4, 5.2.4, 8.4.1, and 9.2.1 discuss this clause in respect to the present study.