Untapped Potential of Local Brewery Brands in Their Communities

Introduction

Craft breweries are small, independent, and traditional businesses (Hede & Watne, 2013). Craft brewers combine historic beer styles with their own unique twists to create innovative beer (Brewers Association, 2020). The popularity of craft beer can be tied to the unique character of craft beer, the demand for product differentiation, and the trend of neolocalism, which is the intentional attempt to obtain local attachment (Baginski & Bell, 2011; Shortridge, 1996).

From 2012 to 2017 the traditional beer market declined by 16% nationwide while the craft brewery industry grew at an annual rate of 13.6% (Holcomb et al., 2018). In 2018 Oklahoma craft breweries made a $646 million economic impact by producing 79,747 barrels of craft beer (Brewers Association, 2019). There are currently more than five times as many breweries in Oklahoma as there were in 2011 (Brewers Association, 2019) in part because of Oklahoma's recent law changes (Roach, 2016). The passage of Oklahoma Senate Bill 424 allowed breweries to sell beer over 3.2% alcohol by volume directly to customers and motivated breweries to open on-premises taprooms (Holcomb et al., 2018).

The popularization is due in large part to changing preferences of buyers (Holcomb et al., 2018). Craft beer brands are "generally presented as entrepreneurial and creative" (Hede & Watne, 2013, para. 23) and tend to appeal to the type of customers who seek new tastes and experiences (Kleban & Nickerson, 2011). The success of the craft beer industry also can be tied to the higher perceived economic value consumers get, and the experience of drinking craft beer (Kleban & Nickerson, 2011) and public claims about traditional and authentic craft production (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000). Craft breweries demonstrate commitment to sustainability, social responsibility, creativity, and tradition, which draws in niche, community-driven markets (Brewers Association, 2019; Gatrell et al., 2018; Sprengeler, 2016).

Neolocalism is helping to drive the U.S. craft beer movement (Schnell & Reese, 2003). Neolocalism includes reconnecting with places, creating a sense of place, and supporting local economies (Flack, 1997; Holtkamp et al., 2016; Shortridge, 1996). This can be found in craft breweries because they often use local heritage, landscape, and culture of their community or state to name their beers, create label designs, their logo, and even the name of the brewery to forge a connection and ingrain themselves in the community (Flack 1997; Schnell & Reese 2003, 2014; Taylor et al., 2020).

A comprehensive understanding of how personnel establish craft breweries' brand with respect to their local communities is needed (Hede & Watne, 2013). Other studies have focused on the names and logos of craft breweries, but neolocalism can also be assessed through observing community engagement and sustainability practices (Reid et al., 2014). There is little academic research related to craft brewery branding or the role a craft brewery has in a community, and Oklahoma has a relatively new craft brewery industry that has not been evaluated in terms of branding. This study aimed to discover how breweries establish their brand with respect to their communities.

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

"A brand is a complex, interrelated system of management decisions and consumer reactions that identifies a product (goods, services, or ideas), builds awareness of it, and creates

meaning for it" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 6). A brand's success can be correlated with its saliency (Ehrenberg et al., 1997). External saliency is the "presence of a brand in the surroundings of a consumer," and internal saliency "has to do with the relative accessibility of a brand representation in memory" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 349). Internal saliency is created through three main sources: someone's use and experience with a brand, their perception of the brand in their social and physical environment, and perceptions of communications about the brand (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009).

Companies or brands use a differentiation strategy to establish saliency (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Differentiation is when companies "aim at distinguishing themselves from the prototype brand in one or several dimensions relevant to a specific consumer segment" (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 172). The goal of differentiation is to establish a branding concept that sets a brand apart from others (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller, 1998). Businesses invest in branding because brand reputation and image forge differentiation from competitors (Mudambi, 2002).

One of the ways craft breweries can differentiate themselves is through place branding, which allows them to foster a sense of belonging and community for customers (Hede & Watne, 2013; Schnell & Reese, 2014). Place branding is the idea that regions, cities, and communities can be branded and has evolved from research regarding place image and marketing (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Place branding is anchored in history, culture, environment, and links people to places creating an attachment (Govers & Go, 2016). Sense of place includes the concepts of place identity and place attachment, and can be strengthened through local ties (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Tuan, 1991).

Fournier (1998) suggested brands can have relationships with consumers, and the quality of the relationship is correlated with the meaningful actions of the brand. Sense of place focuses on how people feel about places and the relationship people have with places they live (Rantanen, 2003; Relph, 1976). It evokes feelings of belonging, and "burrows into the heart of the symbolic place-consciousness" of residents (Flack, 1997, p. 49). Sense of place allows businesses and consumers to create and recreate brands together (Hede & Watne, 2013). Utilizing place branding and the attempt to create a sense of place has increased the popularity of craft breweries and can help breweries build a lasting brand (Flack, 1997; Gatrell et al., 2018).

Events, festivals, and tastings are also opportunities for breweries to connect with consumers, build their brand, and create word-of-mouth advertising (Fountain et al., 2008; Francioni & Byrd, 2012; McQuiston, 2013). If brewery visitors are satisfied with their brewery experience, positive word-of-mouth occurs (Francioni & Byrd, 2012). Word-of-mouth marketing is particularly important for millennials, which is one of the largest consumer groups driving craft brewery growth (Fromm, 2014; Reid et al., 2014), because they are more likely to listen to the recommendations of their friends or online reviews for purchase decisions (Granase, 2012; McCluskey & Shreay, 2011).

A unique aspect of craft breweries is their tendency to focus on collaborations to establish brand loyalty, trust, and innovation with their competitors (Marchak, 2015; Said, 2019). This relates to the idea of coopetition, which is a concept that explains why businesses both compete and cooperate with each other (Mathias et al., 2017). Craft breweries can build an emergent market through coopetition by pooling physical and knowledge resources (Chen & Miller, 2012; Mathias et al., 2017). Mutual benefit and trust are critical components of coopetition (Kraus et al., 2019)

Another salient aspect of craft breweries is their ability to ingrain themselves in their communities as third spaces (Putnam, 2000). Third spaces are places where people can gather away from home and work, allowing them to build connections with other community members

(Hickey, 2012; Mifsud, 2018). Third spaces, such as bookstores, coffee shops, and craft breweries, are the heart of communities and help unite neighborhoods and create unique social value (Mifsud, 2018; Oldenburg, 1999).

Related to third spaces and coopetition is the concept of social capital. Social capital consists of the social relations that can increase the ability of a person to advance their interests (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is a collective resource possessed by communities (Putnam, 2000) and is built when community members interact with one another (Scott, 2017). Social capital helps create new ties within communities and foster the creation of new ideas (Hustedde, 2015). A fundamental aspect of social capital is building relationships and trust between people, which can lead to support and sharing information between community members (Domínguez & Arford, 2010).

Putnam (2000) found the level of civic participation is declining in the United States, which is in turn decreasing the number of venues where social capital is developed. A relaxed venue where people can gather to meet friends and form new relationships is necessary for social capital (Dunbar et al., 2016). Craft breweries can be relaxed venues where social capital is developed through their ability to serve as a third space and build community (Weilar, 2000).

Branding can aid the success of an organization or product, particularly when they are able to create salience and differentiate themselves from competitors. Much of craft breweries' ability to create brand salience and differentiation stems from their ties to communities. Craft breweries can use place branding, serving as a third space, and fostering social capital to help build their brands.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to understand how craft breweries in Oklahoma establish their brand with respect to their communities. The following research questions guided the study:

- RQI: How do brewery personnel establish salience within their respective communities?
- RQ2: How do brewery personnel promote the brewery and their products?
- RQ3: How do brewery personnel create, participate in, and interact with community-based events?
- RQ4: How do brewery personnel perceive the relationship between the brewery and their respective community members?
- RQ5: How do brewery personnel perceive the relationship between the brewery and other local establishments?

Methods

Qualitative research is an "approach to inquiry that begins with assumptions, worldviews, possibly a theoretical lens, and seeks to understand the context or settings of the participants," (Creswell, 2007, p. 51). It was important to use a qualitative approach for this study to gain an understanding of brewery personnel perspectives regarding how breweries establish their brand with respect to the communities they are located in because this type of research approach yields rich, in-depth data and allows research questions to guide the methodology (Flick, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, which allows questions to be asked in order of the flow of the interview conversation (Flick, 2018). To develop the semi-structured

interview guide, the lead researcher met with a brewery owner to explain the purpose of the study and used feedback from the pre-interview to develop the interview guide. This owner participated in the study and was formally interviewed later. The interview guide was finalized following review by an agricultural leadership faculty member at the University of Florida, an agricultural communications faculty member at Oklahoma State University, and a doctoral student in agricultural education at Oklahoma State University. The two faculty members are coauthors on this paper. The interview guide consisted of nine main questions, with two to four follow-up questions each. The questions were direct and open-ended to gain brewery personnel perspectives relating to the brewery and its brand within the community.

Six breweries were selected from a list of 42 breweries in Oklahoma as of January 2018 (Holcomb et al., 2018). Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007). The breweries chosen provided perspectives from a variety of locations and experience levels, which included one of the oldest breweries in the state, some breweries with a few years' experience, and one of the newest breweries in Oklahoma. A recruitment email was sent to the six breweries using email addresses obtained from the business website or social media platforms.

The target was to have two personnel from each brewery participate in the study, which served as the sample this study. Only one person was interviewed at one brewery because the owner did not believe anyone else could provide adequate information due to the limited scale of the operation. There were 11 participants in the study, which included brewery owners and co-owners, taproom managers, and marketing personnel. Data collection concluded after the 11 participants were interviewed because data saturation had been reached (Guest et al., 2006).

All but one interview took place at the brewery the participant owned or worked at. One participant had a non-brewery primary job, and that interview took place at that location instead of the brewery. Other brewery staff were present during two interviews that took place at the brewery, but they did not participate in the discussions. Three interviews were interrupted because the interviewees were needed to answer business or operational questions. The interviews and recordings were paused and began again after the interviewees returned. These factors might have affected participants' responses.

Interviews began on January 28, 2020, and were completed on March 2, 2020. All data were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic causing restrictions to business operation in Oklahoma. The interviews were audio recorded, and handwritten notes were taken during interviews. At the end of each interview, the conversation was summarized to ensure consistency and to serve as a member check (Flick, 2009). The interviews were transcribed verbatim using Temi, a professional transcription service. The transcripts were then listened to, confirmed, and cleaned.

MAXQDA was used to code the interviews. The software served as a tool for transparency of the research process (Trochim, 2020) and made coding more organized. Semantic codes (i.e., "meanings expressed verbally") and latent codes (i.e., "underlying meanings") were applied to the data (Flick, 2018, p. 475). Codes and themes were developed during the process of describing, classifying and interpreting the transcribed text (Creswell, 2007).

The data were analyzed using a combination of Glaser's (1965) constant comparative method and thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). Incidents found in each interview were coded and compared to other incidents (Glaser, 1965). After incidents were compared, these codes were sorted into various themes (Flick, 2018). The themes were linked through the constant comparisons. After the boundaries were set, the themes became more focused. Boundaries for themes consisted of whether the incident was mentioned in more than half of the interviews or if

someone from each of the breweries mentioned similar things. More focused themes emerged after boundaries were placed.

Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to help ensure the quality of the project. To help ensure credibility, the aforementioned experts reviewed the interview guides, and participants' transcribed responses were compared to handwritten notes. Using verbatim transcripts also helped ensure credibility (Creswell, 2007). To help with transferability the context of the interviews was described earlier in the methods section of this paper. Dependability was addressed by creating an audit trail (Flick, 2018) and collecting from multiple locations and populations groups to ensure data triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). To aid confirmability, the main points of the interview were summarized at the end of each interview to serve as a member check and to allow for confirmation of the findings, and the doctoral student who reviewed the instrument also reviewed the audit trail for confirmability measures (Flick, 2009).

The following subjectivity statements from the author team are provided to allow readers to understand any researcher biases that may have potentially influenced the findings (Creswell, 2007): Cara Jolly is from Colorado and has an academic background in agricultural communications and agricultural business. She does not have any personal or financial ties to craft breweries, but she does occasionally consume craft brewery products. Quisto Settle is from Texas and has an academic background in agricultural communications and animal science. He does not have any financial ties to breweries, but he is a consumer of craft beers in Oklahoma. Laura Greenhaw is from New Mexico and currently resides in Florida, studying and teaching agricultural leadership. She has no personal or financial ties to the craft brewery industry but had an interest in supporting and strengthening niche agriculture endeavors such as craft breweries. Ruth Inman grew up in Oklahoma and has deep ties to agriculture in the state. She was not directly involved in data collection. She has a relative who works in the craft brewery industry. Dwayne Cartmell is from Oklahoma and has professional experience in agricultural communications including serving as a faculty member the last 20 years. He enjoys craft beers and craft breweries but does not have any personal or financial investment in a craft brewery business.

Results

RQ1: How Do Brewery Personnel Establish Salience Within Their Respective Communities?

The first research question sought to understand what brewery personnel believe gave the breweries salience within the respective community. Participant responses yielded the following themes: brewery personnel want to be a business the community is proud of, brewery personnel believe they can lead by example, brewery personnel contribute to community cultural revival, breweries function as a community gathering place or neighborhood living room, and breweries sell an experience as well as beer.

Brewery Personnel Want to Be a Business the Community Is Proud of

Participants described their overall view of the brewery in terms of creating a local product that community members could take a sense of ownership in and being a business that improved the community. Hadley stated, "We just want to leave the place better than we found it." Clay said, "I

love beer, and I wanted to create something that people could be proud of. And kind of take ownership in in a sense of 'hey this is our local beer.'"

Brewery Personnel Believe They Can Lead by Example

Participants identified being part of two communities: the beer industry community and the geographic community the brewery is located in. Many participants believed they were in a position to lead by example and create a better community through their community involvement. Emily and Isaac described how their respective breweries led by example. Emily said, "I'd like to think it's a leading-by-example kind of thing and doing positive things for the community and like surrounding areas." Isaac said, "As far as the actual community goes, I think we just want to be a really open, local business that really represents Oklahoma well."

Brewery Personnel Contribute to Community Cultural Revival

Participants expressed how important it was to contribute to community development in terms of cultural revival in a responsible way. Local culture is something they wanted to positively impact. Clay acknowledged there is a delicate balance between revitalization and gentrification, but the brewery strives to contribute to the residential revitalization of the community. Austin said, "We're typically young folks, business folks, entrepreneurs, and we want to just enhance the culture of our towns, with regard to food, entertainment, leisure, all those kinds of things." Hadley elaborated further:

> I think being able to spend local dollars with local craftspeople is just so important to this continuous feedback loop and buy in of a community that is always looking to develop, advance, and redevelop what it means to be [town person], what it means to be Oklahoma, and that's expressed through art, through food, through drink, all these things. We really wanted to embrace the local culture of [town].

Breweries Function as a Community Gathering Place or Neighborhood Living Room

Participants described breweries as community gathering places or neighborhood living rooms. Finn said their space was purposefully designed to provide "that kind of living room feel where everybody's a friend here." Gavin described an intentional effort to make their brewery a gathering place:

> Before we even opened the brewery, we spent our time talking about how we wanted it to be a community spot. We knew we wanted it to be this. You'll find people reading books, and we wanted it that way. We wanted to create a space that felt more European in that sense where it's like, well, just because you're drinking a beer doesn't mean you can't do something productive as well.

Breweries Sell an Experience as Well as Beer

Participants explained craft beer as an experience for customers to enjoy rather than just a product for them to consume. Dalton said,

We want to grow, but our main focus is to make high-quality, consistent, and new products for consumers to experience. … We want to come out with new things all the time and be creative and innovative and come out with new products that people may have never tried.

Austin said, "We've got kinds of a different, all different flavors of beers, and we're more of an experience as well and not just a bar." Hadley explained further: "We sell an experience, and that experience is experienced at our taproom, at our local market by getting to know the people that work there, the people that make the beer, the people that founded it."

RQ2: How Do Brewery Personnel Promote the Brewery and Their Products?

Brewery personnel were asked how they promoted the brewery, including advertising strategies, social media presence, and branding efforts. Responses yielded the following themes: word-of-mouth is a promotion factor, peer promotion of breweries, brewery events are used for promotion, and place branding is a branding technique for breweries.

Word-of-Mouth is a Promotion Factor

Participants described using social media to promote events and their brand, but they indicated customers' word-of-mouth is a major promotion factor. Isaac said, "I say our success is credit to the community because, you know, because we don't do any advertising; it's up to the community to do that outreach for us." Clay also indicated the community was a significant contributor to their promotion:

Again, the community involvement thing is a huge piece of promotion and being involved in so many different groups to kind of get to know these people and get to tell our story and let those people then evangelize for you, I guess in a lot of regards.

Peer Promotion of Breweries

Participants indicated personnel from other breweries played a major role in attracting customers to their taprooms. Emily said it is beneficial for customers to see breweries communicating with each other publicly via social media. Brock said, "And so they're [competing breweries] promoting us, and we're promoting them." Finn elaborated:

If we don't have a type of beer someone's looking for, we're going to suggest something else for them to drink here, and then [we'll] say, "After this you should go check out…" You know, whatever brewery we would recommend that has whatever they're looking for. I'm pretty sure from what I've heard other breweries do the same for us. It's always fun to talk to somebody sitting behind the bar and they'll say, "Oh yeah, we were just at [brewery]. They said we should come check you guys out too." And that's what we do for each other in the industry.

Isaac described similar experiences, saying, "People will come in and say, oh, I was at [local brewery], and the bartenders told me to come over here."

Brewery Events Are Used for Promotion

Participating in community events and beer festivals were also identified as ways to promote the brewery. Josephine said, "Going to like beer festivals and doing a lot of donations and stuff is part of us promoting ourselves." Austin indicated "community engagement" was a strategy they employed: "It's kind of a win-win we think for giving back to the community and getting our name out there."

Place Branding Is a Branding Technique for Breweries

Participants explained using local ties to name the brewery and some beers. Many participants mentioned using local ties specifically for their flagship beers. Clay, a brewery owner, said, "Um, so we have tried to have some sort of local tie or some sort of, um, thing to that. We definitely use Oklahoma imagery." Dalton said, "Early on there was a lot of ties to [town], a lot of our beers have ties to [town]. And so that's kind of an approach that we've taken."

RQ3: How Do Brewery Personnel Create, Participate In, and Interact with Community-Based Events?

Research question three sought to understand how brewery personnel interacted with their respective communities. Themes derived included brewery personnel are civically engaged, brewery personnel are locally minded and partners of the community, brewery personnel are socially responsible, and brewery personnel believe in leaving communities and neighborhoods better than they found them.

Brewery Personnel Are Civically Engaged

Brewery personnel in this study described themselves as having open doors to all groups and being willing to give back to the community. Breweries host events for community members to participate in including brewery events, community themed events, and charity events. Many participants were also on community boards or members of community organizations. Participants also supported staff members' community involvement. Austin believed breweries must serve their community and thought every brewery in Oklahoma was involved in fundraising efforts in their respective communities. Gavin felt like their approach impacted other breweries:

> Before we opened, we spent most of our time talking about the kind of place we wanted to be. We definitely were the event brewery, and I would say inspired the other local breweries to kind of have to almost do that. I mean, I think it's cool that now it's almost like a mandate if you're going to have a brewery, like you better be ready to give back and open up your doors for groups.

Brock described a variety of events the brewery hosts, from baby showers and graduations to regular meetings of the local running club. Clay summed it up, saying, "I had the opportunity to do this pretty much anywhere. … [Town] is my home, and I wanted to do it here, and to be able to use that to make a positive impact."

Brewery Personnel Are Locally Minded and Partners of the Community

Being local minded was an important aspect of these breweries' business model. Not only was being part of the community important, but so was using local products and partnering with local artists and businesses. Several participants expressed the importance of being a community partner and supporting their local community in any way they could. Karleen said, "We do pride ourselves on being local with a lot of things. You know, using local businesses and local artists for promotional items that we get." Emily said, "We definitely use local stuff whenever possible. Um, but a lot of that product isn't really local, the stuff we use in beer, but when it is available, we definitely use that." Similarly, Gavin indicated they also use local products when possible but are willing to go wherever necessary for high-quality product. Brock expressed pride in creating their beer using local grain and went so far as to suggest that they want to "lead the charge to get more things, even more locally grown possible."

Brewery Personnel Are Socially Responsible

Participants discussed the importance of enjoying their product responsibly and the responsibility of balancing revitalization with gentrification. Hadley said, "We just promote the responsible enjoyment and the cultural aspect of it." Clay further explained,

> The craft industry is definitely an industry of quality over quantity. So, we're not out promoting binge drinking or anything like that. In fact, the opposite. We want people to enjoy and enjoy responsibly, and we feel that responsibility then carries over to our being partners in the community and making a positive impact.

Regarding gentrification, Finn added,

> We're very conscious of the fact that as a city gentrifies, all it usually does is push the less fortunate population and the lower income neighborhoods further, further out of town. So, we are mindful of that. The last couple years we've done coat drives and warm clothing drives for the [local non-profit] when winter rolls in.

Brewery Personnel Believe in Leaving Communities and Neighborhoods Better Than They Found Them

The final theme emerged as participants expressed their opportunity as businesses to come together to improve their communities and make a positive impact. Hadley explained, "We want to leave it better than we found it for a better future for our kids and the people around us. That might sound cheesy, but honestly, that's what drives us. And that's not a PR thing." Clay said,

> I think that we can make a positive difference. I've got this idea that a lot of the other guys are on board with, an idea that we can all kind of work together to maybe pick a project and see it through and go spend a couple hours doing good together and come back to whoever's hosting brewery and have a beer and do it again the next quarter.

RQ4: How Do Brewery Personnel Perceive the Relationship Between the Brewery and Their Respective Community Members?

Participants were asked how community members reacted to the brewery opening, whether they heard compliments or complaints, if any cultural beliefs had caused pushback, and how community members responded to the brewery's community involvement. The following themes characterize brewery personnel's perceptions of the brewery-community relationship: breweries have been positively received, brewery personnel feel gratitude from community members, Oklahomans take pride in Oklahoma-made products, and breweries have made an economic impact.

Breweries Have Been Positively Received by Community Members

Participants indicated community members approved of the brewery being in town. Dalton indicated they have had nothing but positive response from the community. Clay believed his community understands the brewery is "community involved and community focused, and we just want to leave the place better than we found it." Hadley said,

> Breweries for the most part are seen as a net positive, I think, in our community here, because of the outreach we do and because we're making a craft product that is more generally consumed for the most part responsibly.

Brewery Personnel Feel Gratitude from Community Members

Participants described community members as grateful. Several participants mentioned people thanking them for opening the brewery and for what they have done for the community. Gavin said, "Every time we do these events, you know more and more people come up and thank our brewery and the place our brewery holds for the city and what it means." Dalton was surprised by community members' reaction, saying,

> You might expect people to like say, "I really like your beer, you guys make great beer," which we get that all the time too. Um, but we didn't expect an appreciation or a thank you for bringing it here.

Karleen shared that city leaders and nonprofit organizations also thanked the brewery for their contributions to the community.

Oklahomans Take Pride in Oklahoma-Made Products

This theme reflected the mentality participants felt their customers and Oklahoma residents have regarding local businesses and Oklahoma-made products. Specifically, Isaac said, "I think Oklahomans really love local businesses and Oklahoma stuff. So, anything that's gonna drive more people to the state, I think people are gonna like." He added, "I think Oklahomans are really true to their identity and take their identity very seriously. We want to represent that well."

Breweries Have Made an Economic Impact

Participants described the economic impacts the craft brewery industry has made on communities through the increase of manufacturing jobs and the increase of tourism. One participant, who cannot be named because of potential identification concerns, said they had received an award from a state agency for their effect on the economy and essentially creating an industry in Oklahoma. Hadley said, "The craft brewing brought manufacturing jobs back to main street." Josephine referenced the impact breweries have on tourism, saying, "I think people are willing to travel to get to a brewery a lot of the time, um, rather than just like a restaurant or something."

RQ5: How Do Brewery Personnel Perceive the Relationship Between the Brewery and Other Local Establishments?

Research question five sought to understand the relationship between breweries and other local establishments including other breweries. The following themes emerged: a rising tide floats all boats, the competition between craft breweries and macro-breweries resembles David versus Goliath, brewers with more experience mentor new brewers, breweries borrow sugar from their neighbors, and interaction between Oklahoma breweries resembles friendship.

A Rising Tide Floats All Boats

As participants explained the competition between Oklahoma craft breweries, the idea of promoting craft first and the analogy of a rising tide floats all boats emerged. Brewery personnel believed what is good for one brewery is good for all breweries in Oklahoma. Clay explained:

> It's obviously the whole adage of the rising tide floats all boats. But I think more than anything it's continuing to build that culture. If you have people out there doing things the wrong way, if you have people out there making bad beer as we're trying to gain more craft drinkers, as the industry continues to grow, it doesn't benefit anybody if people are doing things the wrong way.

Dalton referenced the same analogy:

> So, we're all the boats. And so, if another brewery comes along, and they produce really good beer, and let's say you're a Bud Light drinker, and they convert you to craft beer, craft beer drinkers are not loyal to just one brewery. Usually they're loyal to craft, and so they want to go try new things.

The Competition Between Craft Breweries and Macro-Breweries Resembles David vs. Goliath

While participants did not perceive fellow craft breweries as competitors, they depicted their competition with macro-breweries as resembling David versus Goliath. Macro breweries are national or international breweries that mass produce and distribute beer in large quantities (Brewers Association, 2020). Finn said, "So, it's definitely more about fighting against the big guys than it is fighting amongst ourselves." Brock agreed:

Um, I would say that no Oklahoma brewery is our competitor. I would say the big two breweries, um, in the United States, the macro breweries, the ones that are not defined by the Brewer's Association as craft breweries, are our competitors.

Brewers with More Experience Mentor New Brewers

Participants described sharing information and helping other craft breweries to ensure the success of the industry. In addition, participants have brewed collaboratively to support each other. Clay said, "I think the more that we can kind of work together, the more we can share that information to help raise everybody's game, then that's the better it is for everyone." Dalton described being on the receiving end of that help:

When we first got into the industry, we thought other breweries might look at us as just straight competition, and they wouldn't give us advice, or they wouldn't give us help. Um, and that's not the case at all. They have actually been nothing but helpful to us. They've answered our questions, they pointed us in the right direction, and it was so refreshing when we kind of figured that out 'cause we didn't think it was going to be that way. I mean if you get into any other industry and you're trying to steal sales, what we thought we were trying to compete for shelf space and tap handle space, and these guys are actually helping us out. It made no sense to us at first. But then you get into the industry and you realize that the mentality and the mindset is promoting craft first. It's refreshing.

Josephine had experienced both willingness and unwillingness to collaborate. Regarding the brewery she works for, she said, "We do collaborations and put each other's names on it. I mean why not, right? The more like creative minds, the better." However, she indicated that was not always the case, though she was hopeful the collaborative culture would persist as the craft beer community continues to grow.

Breweries Borrow Sugar from Their Neighbors

Relationships between craft breweries go beyond mentoring and advice to literal sharing of resources. Participants admitted they borrow ingredients from other craft breweries if they are low on certain ingredients on brew days and said sharing ingredients and buying orders together saves on shipping costs. Gavin said, "Um, we all, I mean I hook people up with grains and hops all the time." Similarly, Austin shared, "We interact all the time with breweries down in [town] and [town], primarily those two [locations] through sharing ideas and equipment." Josephine said they contract brewed for a new brewery as it got up and running. Finn described working together to save on purchasing and shipping costs, and ensuring everyone has what they need:

[Local brewers] will call me sometimes and say, "I'm buying this piece of equipment. If I buy two more, I can get free shipping. Are you in?" So, I'll say, "Yeah grab me two." Then when I'm buying stuff I'll say, "Hey I've already got a pallet" So, if I'm paying for a pallet already, I ask, "Do you want in on the pallet? I've got space." So, effectively you know you can get stuff cheaper, you know save on shipping and take advantage of bulk ordering. So, it's just scratching each other's backs. If we do a grain inventory before a brew day and

realize we're one bag short of something special, you know, we just call the brewery next door. "Can I borrow a bag of wheat?" It's just what we do. It's like borrowing sugar from your neighbor. It's like, "I need two bags of wheat. My truck comes in two days from now, but I need to brew tomorrow." It's just what we do.

Interaction Between Oklahoma Breweries Resembles Friendship

Participants described other craft brewery personnel as their friends. Gavin said, "I would say 95% of the breweries here in [local area] I'm friends, if not close friends, with the people that run them." Blaine said, "like [brewery] across the road, when they were doing construction, they'd be in here at the end of each day just having a drink afterwards. So, you know, we all build a rapport." Clay also described having good relationships with other breweries: "I mean at the end of the day, this is a craft industry, so you've got people who are passionate about what they do, and so we're all beer lovers first and business owners second probably."

Conclusions & Implications

RQ1: How Do Brewery Personnel Establish Salience Within Their Respective Communities?

Participants said they want to make local beer that is part of the heritage of the community and something community members could have a sense of ownership in. Brewery personnel noted the importance of being businesses community members are proud of. These findings indicate craft breweries in Oklahoma aim to foster closeness with community members through creating a local product, which supports Schnell and Reese's (2003) findings. Participants believed they were able to lead the effort of creating a community through their events and by representing Oklahoma well. These breweries focused on creating a place where people can connect, which is in line with Tuan's (1991) suggestion that place is created when people get to know it better and associate value with a space or business.

The brewery personnel said they wanted to positively impact their communities' cultures and economies, which supports Fournier's (1998) idea of a brand relationship being related to the meaningful actions of the brand and its consumers' mutual benefit. Findings indicated craft breweries benefit their local communities through local engagements and partnerships, which creates a sense of belonging (Schnell & Reese, 2014). Participants indicated their craft breweries served as places for people to connect with each other, similar to Hickey's (2012) idea of a third space being a living room for the society at large. Participants said the breweries sell an experience along with beer, and being a craft brewery meant the brewery and its personnel were creative and innovative. These factors help enhance the experiences of craft brewery customers, which helps create internal saliency (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Participants said they wanted to make innovative, high-quality beers for consumers to enjoy. By being creative and innovative, craft brewery personnel provided opportunities for consumers to try products they may have never seen or tried before. Creativity and innovation aid salience, which is also likely to help create differentiation (Keller, 1998).

RQ2: How Do Brewery Personnel Promote the Brewery and Their Products?

As mentioned in the previous section, most breweries in the study indicated that being creative and innovative was important in both products and branding (McQuiston, 2013). They used place branding such as early industries, town founders, town heritage, seasons and harvest cycles, and local heroes to name products (Flack, 1997; Schnell & Reese, 2014). The craft brewery personnel in this study said they used local ties to name some of their beers, especially their flagship beers. Those local ties could help breweries differentiate their products from breweries in other locations.

Participants said other breweries played a major role in attracting customers to try their beer and visit their taprooms, which helped them expand their market and relates to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital. Word-of-mouth was one of the biggest factors of spreading the brand of the brewery along with engaging in, participating in, and hosting events, which is significant given that word-of-mouth recommendations are important for millennials (Granase, 2012; McCluskey & Shreay, 2011). Participants also mentioned using events, tastings, and local or regional festivals to promote their products and reach consumers, in line with literature on breweries (Fountain et al., 2008; Francioni & Byrd, 2012; McQuiston, 2013).

RQ3: How Do Brewery Personnel Create, Participate in, and Interact With Community-Based Events?

Participants said being locally minded was an important aspect of their business models. Local engagement extended to using local products and partnering with local artists and businesses. These conscious efforts to forge ties with the local community are examples of neolocalism (Shortridge, 1996).

Brewery personnel saw themselves as socially responsible and believed in leaving communities and neighborhoods better than they found them. Civic engagement has been stated to be a success indicator for craft breweries by Gatrell et al. (2019). Breweries in this study participated in special releases, charity nights, and community events to promote their brands (McQuiston, 2013). Often, brewery owners and employees ingrained themselves in the community by serving on community boards or being members of community organizations, which helped the breweries build relationships (Fournier, 1998).

Participants also discussed social responsibility in terms of consumers enjoying their product responsibly and their responsibility in balancing revitalization with gentrification. These participants said they have the opportunity to team together with other businesses to improve their communities. This emphasis on social responsibility is important because values are the core of a brand's culture (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009).

RQ4: How Do Brewery Personnel Perceive the Relationship Between the Brewery and Their Respective Community Members?

Participants indicated the craft breweries have been well received by community members. The breweries in this study were using neolocalism to actively attempt to resurrect the feeling of community through building relationships and new connections with the places they are located as well as a sense of place (Flack, 1997; Schnell & Reese, 2003, 2014). Participants said community members' responses to breweries' engagement in community events have been

positive. Participants said city leaders have thanked them for their contributions to the community. Connecting with their communities can help breweries foster relationships with community members, which benefits the breweries' brands (Fournier, 1998; Taylor et al., 2020). The participants reported that breweries' use of local identifiers have helped connect with state residents via a shared local identity (Taylor et al., 2020)

RQ5: How Do Brewery Personnel Perceive the Relationship Between the Brewery and Other Local Establishments?

In summarizing how brewery personnel perceived the relationship between the brewery and other local establishments, including other craft breweries, an overarching characteristic of social capital (Scott, 2017) emerged through the five themes. Participants used the analogy of a rising tide floats all boats emerged, which meant that what is good for one brewery is good for all craft breweries in Oklahoma. They emphasized the importance of building the craft culture by helping everyone produce higher quality products and ensure the odds of more people drinking craft beer (Mathias et al., 2017). This is important because Chen and Miller (2012) and Mathias et al. (2017) suggested more people drinking craft beer will legitimize the market.

Participants recognized the mutual benefits of helping one another (Mathias et al., 2017) and supported the concept of social capital's value for within the Oklahoma craft brewery industry (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 1993; Scott, 2017). Participants mentioned more experienced craft brewers helped mentor them by answering questions, collaborating, and pointing them in the right direction (Marchak 2015; Said, 2019). Sharing information is important because it helps ensure the success of the industry (Chen & Miller, 2012; Mathias et al., 2017). Participants further explained they borrowed ingredients from other craft breweries when necessary. Sharing resources with other craft breweries, who could be seen as competition, demonstrates the idea of coopetition (Said, 2019). The relationships between Oklahoma craft breweries resemble a friendship with trust, which is important because the fundamental aspects of social capital are relationships and trust (Domínguez & Arford, 2010).

Recommendations for Future Research

This project contributes to understanding how craft breweries establish their brand with respect to their communities, but more research is needed. Oklahoma has a relatively new craft brewery industry. It would be valuable to study other states with more established brewery industries because findings may differ. Craft breweries are locally situated, but their products can be distributed throughout the state and the nation. It would be valuable to gain consumer perspectives of craft beer once it is sold beyond its community. There would also be value in studying craft brewery customers in Oklahoma to understand their perspectives for how craft breweries are establishing their brands.

This study indicated craft breweries in Oklahoma are potentially venues where place is experienced and social capital is shared, but more research beyond craft breweries may provide more insight into the role place and social capital play in the branding of locally oriented business endeavors. Place branding and social capital should be used as frameworks for assessing other agricultural organizations.

Practical Recommendations

This research indicated these Oklahoma craft breweries serve as a potential third space location for consumers, which leads to shared social capital. Craft brewery owners should be aware of their potential to foster third space locations that can help unite community members (Bourdieu, 1986; Oldenburg, 1999). As stated earlier, more research is needed to fully understand the situation, but city leaders should be aware of the potential role craft breweries play as a location where connections and a sense of place can be fostered.

This research indicated these Oklahoma craft brewers believe they are building positive connections with their communities through community engagement activities. On this basis, other craft breweries should consider participating in community events as an opportunity to create an attachment. Partnering with other local businesses may also a good way for breweries to engage in their communities. This is important because the success of a craft brewery can be linked to the success of its community. Additionally, place branding may offer breweries the opportunity to connect with communities while also fostering brand differentiation for products.

This research provided further insight into how Oklahoma craft breweries interact with one another. Craft breweries should recognize the potential benefits of working together as an industry. Coopetition can increase their overall market share and can help legitimize the craft brewery industry in Oklahoma and potentially beyond.

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