RESEARCH PAPER

A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION OF TRADITIONAL CLUBS IN LONDON

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ABSTRACT: The world of traditional clubs in London may be regarded as an anachronism in the modern age of technology and electronic communication. However, traditional London clubs nevertheless continue to thrive and flourish. While there is considerable literature about the theory and practice of hospitality management, traditional club operations, membership and management have not been explored in an academic way. The aim of this paper is to attempt to remedy this research gap by presenting a historical review of the emergence of the club over time. Subsequently, the current state of traditional clubs in London is analysed and 54 clubs are classified in 9 categories, according to their aims or provenance. A review of the literature on Sociology, Economics and Hospitality leads to the proposal of a model of the elements of the traditional club, where tradition seems to be the operative word. Finally, the connections between traditional clubs and hotels are contrasted in a table. The paper concludes that, the lack of definitive information or a single professional association about traditional London clubs hampers analysis, but more research is needed about the nature of club membership, employees and management. **Keywords:** Clubs, Traditional Clubs, London, Hospitality Management

RESUMEN: El mundo de los clubes tradicionales en Londres puede ser visto como un anacronismo en la era moderna de la tecnología y comunicación electrónica. Sin embargo, los clubes tradicionales de Londres siguen prosperando y floreciendo. Al contrario de la gestión hostelera, cuya teoría y práctica tienen una considerable literatura, las operaciones, adhesión y gestión de los clubes tradicionales no han sido explotadas de una manera académica. El objetivo de este artículo es suprimir este fallo en el dominio de la investigación y presentar una revisión histórica del aparecimiento de los clubes a lo largo del tiempo. A continuación, será analizado el estado actual de los clubes tradicionales en Londres, y se hará la clasificación de 54 clubes en 9 categorías según sus objetivos o proveniencia. Una revisión de literatura sobre Sociología, Economía y Hostelería lleva a la propuesta de un modelo sobre los elementos de un club tradicional, donde 'tradición' parece ser la palabra-clave. Al final, las conexiones entre clubes tradicionales y hoteles son contrastadas en una tabla. El artículo concluye que, la falta de información conclusiva o de una asociación profesional de clubes tradicionales en Londres dificulta el análisis, pero es necesaria más investigación sobre la naturaleza de los miembros,

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funcionarios y gestión de estos clubes. **Palabras clave:** clubes/asociaciones, clubes tradicionales, Londres, gestión hostelera

RESUMO: O mundo dos clubes tradicionais em Londres pode ser visto como um anacronismo na era moderna da tecnologia e comunicação eletrónica. No entanto, os clubes tradicionais londrinos continuam a prosperar e a florescer. Ao contrário da gestão hoteleira, cuja teoria e prática gozam de considerável literatura, as operações, adesão e gestão dos clubes tradicionais não têm sido exploradas de uma forma académica. O objetivo deste artigo é tentar colmatar esta lacuna no domínio da investigação e apresentar uma revisão histórica do surgimento dos clubes ao longo do tempo. Subsequentemente, é analisado o estado atual dos clubes tradicionais em Londres, e procede-se à classificação de 54 clubes em 9 categorias de acordo com os seus objetivos ou proveniência. Uma revisão de literatura sobre Sociologia, Economia e Hotelaria conduz à proposta de um modelo acerca dos elementos de um clube tradicional, onde 'tradição' parece ser a palavra-chave. Por fim, as conexões entre clubes tradicionais e hotéis são contrastadas numa tabela. O artigo conclui que, a falta de informação concludente ou de uma associação profissional de clubes tradicionais londrinos dificulta a análise, mas é necessária mais investigação acerca da natureza dos membros, funcionários e gestão destes clubes. **Palavras-chave:** clubes/associações, clubes tradicionais, Londres, gestão hoteleira

INTRODUCTION

Clubs are associations of like-minded people who meet together for various reasons. Traditional clubs have been a feature of western society for many centuries. Gentlemen's clubs are considered to have their origins in the Italian Renaissance, in formal academies of Humanists and informal groups of people studying classical texts together (Löffler, 2006). They developed through the Enlightenment and many focussed upon scientific or philanthropic goals. In England, they developed through meeting at coffee houses, where business was done in a social environment. Walton (2000: 66) comments on the social history of gentlemen's clubs which "*creamed off the most affluent*". In London, they proliferated in the 1850s around Pall Mall and 'offered a masculine environment, with membership controlled by vote as well as subscription level, with their imposing libraries, smoking rooms, morning rooms and dining accommodation offered privileged enclaves for like minded people, enabling aristocrats and affluent professional men to escape from their families as well as their social inferiors'. The gentleman's club flourished in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has spread through the English-speaking world. Some literature exists about the membership and history of these establishments, but there is little research on the exact nature of hospitality within them.

The aims of this paper are to:

Investigate the little-researched area of traditional clubs, particularly clubs in London

Provide a historical context for clubs in London

Review the current situation of traditional clubs in London and categorise them by activity and tradition

Present a conceptual underpinning for traditional clubs based upon sociology, economic and hospitality management literature

Develop a conceptual model of how traditional London clubs have emerged over time and operate

Propose future research themes.

HISTORY

Origins

Although gentlemen's clubs have evolved from coffeehouses in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, their origins can be traced to the Greco-Roman World (8th century BC) (Timbs, 1866; Hay, 1870 and Clark, 2000). During this time men used to meet and debate ethics and social life, be amused by dancers and/or musicians and recite poetry in drinking parties, the Greeks called such a party a *Symposium* and the Romans, a *Convivium* (Smith, 1853; Smith, 2003). Cicero in a letter to Paetus (Garnsey, 1999:136) mentions that these parties were *"the obvious place for interaction, conversation and relaxation, the place and occasion where friendship was strengthened and cultural attainment displayed"*.

Concomitant to that idea, Addison, an eminent essayist and creator of the defunct *The Spectator* (1710-1711) mentions that *"all celebrated clubs were founded upon eating and drinking, which are points where most men agree"* (Timbs, 1866:1), thus reassuring them as the club's progenitor.

Britain and clubs

In every community during Roman ruled Britain there was a *Collegium*, Long (in Smith [ed.] (1853:311) posits that *"the word Collegium properly expressed the notion of several persons being united in any*

office or for any common purpose", this Roman institution was *"partly religious, partly social, partly based on business interests"* (Collingwood and Myres, 1934:201) and looked after burials and business related issues from the community; they resembled religious guilds of the medieval times.

The return of the Roman troops to Italy saw the Anglo-Saxons invading and conquering Britain. According to Crouch (2000) during their time most of the Roman corporations started to disappear, however, guilds of stonecutters and glass makers survived, their members held a party every 26th of December where they swore oath to help each other. Inspired by them, the Anglo-Saxons had banqueting feasts where they indulged themselves to excess.

During Norman Britain, due to the *"quickening pace of commercial expansion"* of the continent (Clark, 2000:13) those guilds evolved and assumed a system seen throughout Europe: the organization of festivities and the patronage of arts. And it's only during the late part of the Middle Ages that we see the flourishing of religious confraternities and guilds and merchant guilds (Clark, 2000).

Meanwhile, there was the emergence of academies and societies during the Italian Renaissance (Clark, 2000). Societies and academies started to appear throughout Western Europe in the next 150 years as the Renaissance period arrived to those countries. As it arrived in Britain, it brought the end of medieval times and the start of the Tudor regime and with it Reformation Period which lasted just over 200 years. During this period the monarchy began to break with the Catholic Church and created the English Protestant Church.

Because of that, as Schmid (in [Ed.] Wagner and Schmid, 2012) posits, those religious confraternities and guilds started to disappear with the abolishment of chantries by the kingdom (Chantries Act 1545 and 1547), merchant guilds only survived after much protest and *"deprived of most of their religious trappings"* (Clark, 2000:23).

Wagner and Schmid (2012) posit that during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) English gentlemen and noblemen started

travelling around Europe in order to broaden their learned knowledge, thus originating the Grand Tour. On their return they started to organize academies, societies and sodalities inspired by what was seen in the continent and shaped by the confraternities and guilds existent in the country.

In 1603 there was the accession of the House of Stuarts to the English throne. This period of English history is marked by the English Revolution (1640-1660) and the origins of clubs in coffee houses. In 1650 the first coffee house opened in Oxford and in London in 1652. They looked like taverns and their clientele consisted of the English Virtuosi and Bourgeois (Ulkers, 1922; Cowan, 2005; Ellis, 2011). Customers were relatively wealthy men interested in discussing politics and arts as well as conducting business. It was believed that, because of the stimulant nature of coffee, those types of men preferred to meet at those places because it helped to cultivate creativity (Ellis, 2011). Sodalities and political parties as well as professional traders gathered together in taverns and coffeehouses (Clark, 2000). Nevill (1911:3) adds that *"every profession, trade, class, party, had its favourite coffee-house"*.

According to Timbs (1866:4) it was John Aubrey, an English writer, that first used the term *"clubbe"* for a *"sodality in a tavern"* while he was a member of the debating society called Rota Club that used to meet in a coffeehouse during the English *Interregnum* period of 1649-1660. The Interregnum, according to Ellis (2011), marked the *"first great period of clubbing in London"*.

The end of the English Revolution in 1660 marks the history of England as the year of the Restoration of the monarchy and the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, which gave fruit to the English urban renaissance and the blooming of the traditional English clubs known today. Clark (2000b; 2009) posits that conspicuously to the post-Restoration period was the arrival of fashionable entertainments (theatre, concerts) which alongside the growing influx of wealthy landowners, the competition generated by public drinking houses and taverns, the rising of political and religious freedom and the development of printed

press, as well as the inspiration provided by academies shaped by the religious guilds seen in the past, provided the breakthrough for clubs to grow in numbers and its public recognition (Bovill, 1962; Hay, 1870; Clark, 2000a; 2000b; 2009 and Timbs, 1866). Coffeehouses with their clubs and societies were intrinsically the life and blood of the English society by the time of the Glorious Revolution (1688).

If the gods spared the existence of the coffeehouses in 1665 (plague) and 1666 (great fire) it was not going to be a king that would abolish them; for a short period of 11 days in 1675, King Charles II issued a proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee Houses. The reason behind it was that those places were renowned for being exclusively political (Timbs, 1866) and its patronage known for being discontent with his government (Ulkers, 1922; Tennenhouse in [Ed] Kastan, 2006; Ellis, 2011).

As the Georgian period began in 1714 the coffeehouse culture started to spring throughout the country, in London alone there were over 3000. Tosh (1999:127) mentions that *the writer Edward Kimber noted in 1750 that 20000 Londoners forgathered every night in clubs"* thus enhancing that clubs were one of the most distinctive socio-cultural institutions of this period (Clark, 2000a).

Coffeehouses reached their decline stage by the end of the 18th early 19th century as clubs that once they housed evolved becoming more formal and started to build their own premises for meetings (Reed in [ed.] Clark, 2009) and tea became a fashion at court, as well as the government incentive and support in importing tea from the east. Clark (2000b) mentions that the first clubs started to appear and spring through Western Europe.

Pall Mall and St. James's Street in London are recognized as the Clubland because of their past and continuing presence in housing coffeehouses and the most traditional gentlemen's clubs (Timbs, 1866; Hay, 1870; Olsen, 1999 and Clark, 2000b).

Clubs reached their heyday in late Georgian period and early Victoria regime (Kent in Mitchell, 1999) during the Reform Act days (1832, 1867 and 1884) and especially because of the Indus-

trial Revolution (1780-1870): *"The Industrial Revolution (…) was a period of unprecedented technological, economic and social change that completely transformed British culture from a largely rural, static society with limited production and division of labour into the the world's first modern industrial society"* (Parliament, Online).

Between 1850 and 1880 clubs started to become less political and more social (Ensor, 1936) as well as the emergence of exclusive working men clubs, first created by the middle-class and later taken by the working class for their entertainment (Bailey, 1978 and Cherrington, 2012). They both run similarly, the difference was the patronage class that attended those clubs.

Forrest (1982) posits that the start of First World War (1914-18) brought great stress not only to clubs but for the whole country. McCord and Purdue (2007:536) add that the *"Great War (…) has been seen with much justice as marking a watershed or great divide in British history, demarcating the pre-war society, its politics, and economy from a very different post war world"*. Because of war young men were called to the front and to fight for the country, those who stayed did their best to support them, charities and funds were created in aid to those at war. Forrest (1982) adds that because of that clubs also went through financial difficulties during this war, besides the decline of attendance by the members who had been called to the front, the prices of goods and services rose causing certain items of food and beverage to be rationed. Forrest (1982:104) mentions that *"most of the West End clubs tackled their wartime deficits by increasing subscriptions, while at the same time encouraging Serving personnel to join on easy terms, usually without entrance fee"*.

In 1939 the Second World War started and with it brought *"a strange, uneasy mixture of the austere and the convivial, the bonhomous and the apprehensive"* (Forrest, 1982:133) feeling back. However, the power of the war was this time felt mostly in the country rather than the continent with the constant air raids in the early 1940s, which cause some damage to certain clubs. Since the war, some gentlemen's clubs have allowed ladies to become members or to attend as guests.
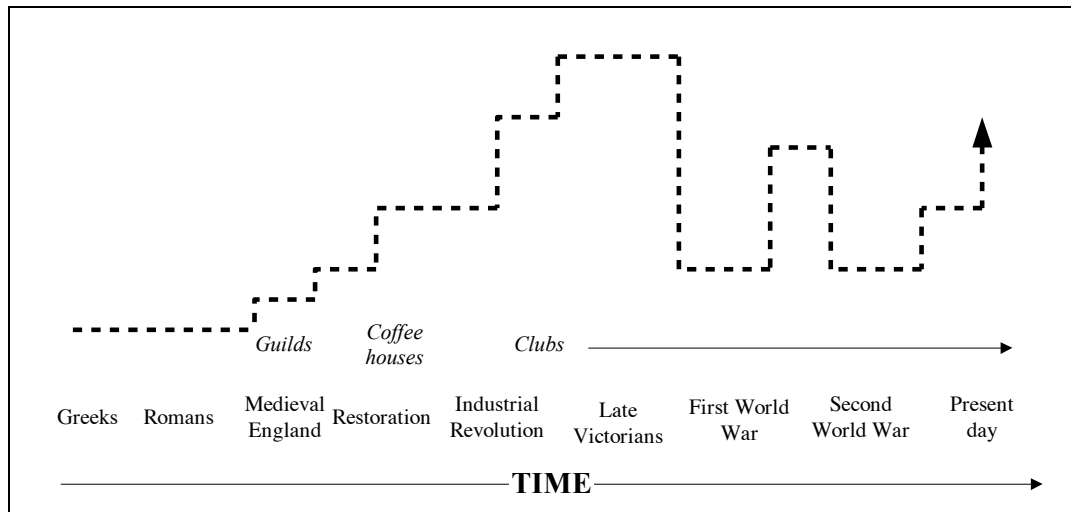
Figure 1: Club popularity in England over time

Figure 1 gives a temporal interpretation of the development and popularity of English clubs. It offers a graphical, rather than statistical representation of the major stages in growth over time and suggests that traditional clubs are continuing to flourish, especially in London.

It is clear now that the origins of clubs and the social history of Britain are interconnected, as Hay (1870:31-32) notes "*the changes that it took place in the economy of the one keep pace exactly with those which took place in the economy of the other*".

CURRENT STATE OF TRADITIONAL CLUBS IN LONDON

There is no definitive number of traditional clubs in London. After all, how can clubs be defined or the limits of London bounded? Wikipedia suggests that there are approximately 50 gentlemen's clubs in London and notes 55 on their website (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_London's_gentlemen's_clubs). The Club Secretaries and Managers Association (CSMA) includes 15 London club members on its website and provides "*an educational forum which furthers professionalism, education and social activities for Managers of Clubs of a compatible character, and to promote and encourage efficient and successful Club Management*" (http://www.csma.org.uk/mainclub.htm). The CSMA also provides a link to the Club Managers Association of Europe, which consists mostly

of sports and golf clubs. Eligibility to The Association of London Clubs (ALC) includes location in the Greater London Area (within the M25), being in existence for more than 5 years and to have a minimum of 200 members, and are not all exclusively for gentlemen. The ALC has 54 member clubs (some different from the Wikipedia list) and their activities/origins may be classified under the following nine headings:

  • Arts: including literature and entertainment
  • Education: usually places of higher educations
  • Geography: according to region, country or travel. These include those involved in the British Empire
  • Hobbies: activities which may not be regarded as physical sports, for example fly fishing and bridge
  • Political: origins in political ideology
  • Professional: usually for business purposes
  • Services: military or armed services
  • Social: where the main purpose is meeting like-minded people
  • Sport: includes cricket and rowing.

Figure 2 suggests that the statistical dispersion in the nine categories is quite even, with social and sport being the most important in the 54 members of the ALC.
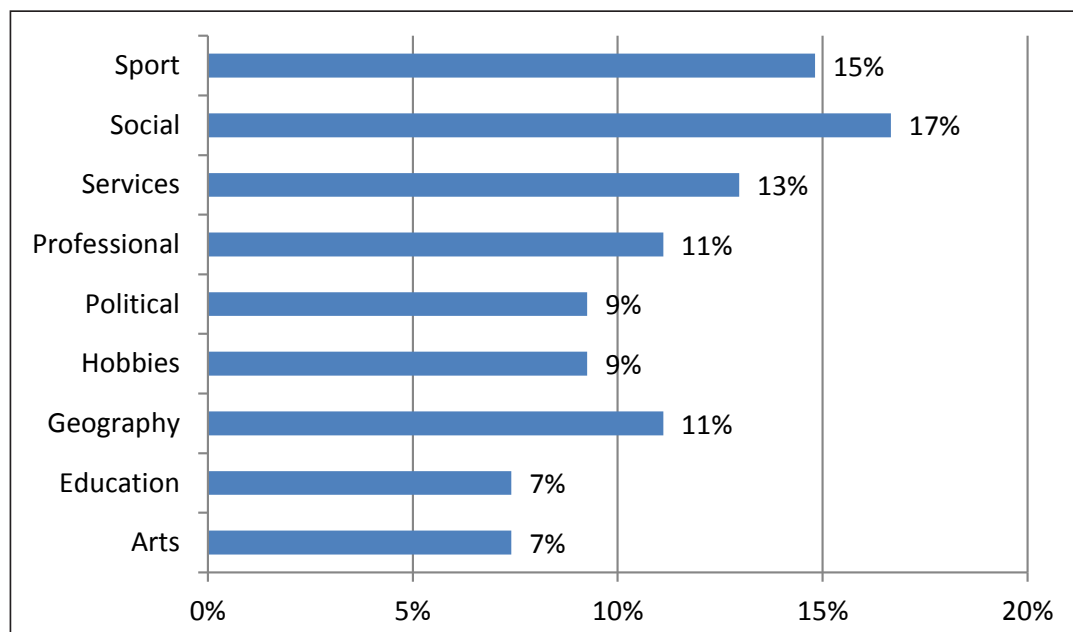

Figure 2: Classification of traditional London clubs (n=54)

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is little applied literature which might help to explain the nature of traditional clubs, so, this paper will explore the generic fields of sociology and economics before addressing hospitality management research. Figure 3 shows how these disciplines interconnect.
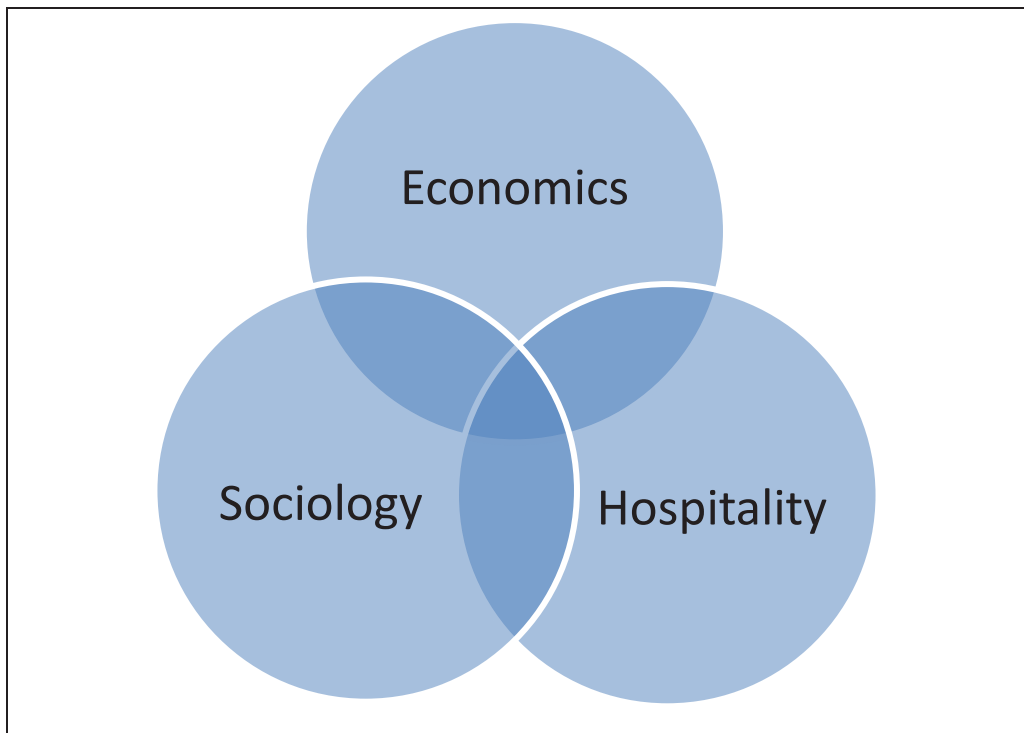

Figure 3: The interconnecting themes for the literature review

The literature will first address definitions of clubs and seeks to characterise the nature of traditional private clubs. Subsequently, sociological, economic and hospitality management literature is presented, in preparation for a model of traditional clubs.

Definitions
A club can be defined as 'an association of persons uniting by some common interest, meeting periodically for a shared activity (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976: 189). Medlik (2003: 37) defines clubs as "*normally an establishment providing food and drink, also sometimes entertainment, overnight accommodation and other facilities and services, for members and not the general public*". The exact meaning of

the term differs sometimes between the British Isles, where the club originated, and other countries'. For example, in the USA, gentlemen's clubs often have a more salacious meaning. Peacock and Selvarajah (2000:234) define a private club as 'a social club for which prospective members must be nominated by existing members to a membership committee'. Harmer (1991) suggest that the members of private social clubs are loyal and tend to be wealthier than most. Perdue (2007: 3) define private clubs as 'a place where people with a common bond of some type – similar interests, experiences, backgrounds, professions and so on – can congregate for social and recreational purposes. By definition, a private club is a place that is not open to the public; an individual must be accepted by the rest of the membership before he or she may join'. Traditional clubs provide a haven or refuge for their members including lounges, libraries, food and drink and sometimes entertainment and accommodation. Nowadays, clubs exist for various reasons, including for charitable, religious or political reasons, or for hobbies, sports, and social activities.

In summary, traditional private clubs may be characterised as elitist organisations which are closed to the public and limited in numbers. Membership is somewhat self-selecting from existing networks and the clubs are usually run by committees, with the help of a team of hospitality professionals.

Sociology literature

Haralambos and Holborn (2008: 1) suggest that sociology attempts 'to explain and understand the behaviour of human beings in society'. Heller (1989) contends that a community may be characterised by the relational activities or social ties that draw people together. Gusfield (1975) suggests that clubs involve human relationships in communities of interests. A sense of community is generated when members feel a relationship to a community and a sense of belonging. This may involve the perception of similarity to other members and a feeling of interdependence with them (Sarason, 1974). McMillan and Chavis (1986) suggest that this sense of community has four elements - belonging, influence, needs and emotion:

• *Belonging:* members feel that people experience feelings of belonging to their community

• *Influence*: implies that people feel they can make a difference in their community

• *Needs fulfilment*: suggests that members of a community believe that the resources available in their community will meet their needs

• *Emotional connection*: the belief that community members share history, time, places and experiences.

Bishop et al (2002) seek to characterise the rural community and suggest that there are parallels with club membership. For example, a club's history tends to characterise its current operations and ethos, while older communities often have barriers to easy membership and maintain traditional approaches to social organisation. It may be suggested that traditional clubs in London share the characteristics of a 'rural village'.

Sociologists like Vilifredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) saw elite rule as inevitable (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008:31) and the Victorian period in London saw a proliferation of clubs which strengthened elite dominance. Mills (1956) suggests that the unity and cohesiveness of the power elite are strengthened by the similarity of social backgrounds, and clubs offer opportunities to mix with like-minded people of the same social persuasion.

The glue that contributes to cohesion in 'communities-of-common-purpose (Falk and Kirkpatrick, 2000:2) may be social capital. Bordieu (1991: 230-251) suggests that there are different types of capital: cultural, economic, functional, linguistic, personal, political, professional, social and symbolic. Coleman (1990) posits that mutual trust is an essential element of social cohesion. Fukuyama (1995: 27) develops a definition of trust as, 'the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms'. Putnam (1995) bewails the decline of social capital, suggesting that pressures of modern life have encouraged individualism in watching television and video at the expense of active club membership. It may be argued that modern club members are conservative in outlook and prefer contact and conversation with 'real' people. However, perhaps both traditional clubs and modern electronic life may be regarded as 'closed worlds', one collective and the other individualistic.

The issue of social class has become less definitive in the UK over time. Haralambos and Holborn (2008) contend that, in Western societies, there are no longer distinct classes whose members have a common sense of shared identity. Watson and Hill (2012) recall that Joint Industrial Committee for National Readership Surveys (JICNARS) in the UK bases demographics and social classification upon readership of newspapers. As 'hard' newspaper readership declines, Savage et al (2013) propose a new model of social classification based on Bordieu's notion of capital. They suggest that elites have the highest number of social contacts and 'highbrow' social capital whose members are over-represented from elite universities and are located especially in the areas close to London. Joseph (1989: 39) sees professionalization as a process which, in Victorian times, was rather like 'companies of equals' where admittance was a matter of status. Professional socialisation occurs where 'members become bound to their chosen field and to each other (Joseph, 1989: 40).

This helps to explain the sociological reasons why people might join clubs, especially in London, but are there other reasons? Woolcock (1998) makes the interesting point that social capital contributes to achieving desired socio-economic outcomes, which suggests that club membership might be sought for a variety of complex reasons.

Economic literature

Much of the academic literature on clubs comes from the discipline of economic theory. Buchanan (1965) proposes an economic theory of clubs based on the work of Pigou (1920) and Knight (1924), whose work on congested roads led to tolls and therefore the determination of 'membership size'. The rich economic literature is mostly concerned with the producing mathematical models of the allocation of shared resources rather than Schelling's (1969) concept of a club as a 'pure taste for association'. Sandler and Tschirhart (1980: 1482) define a club as "*a voluntary group deriving mutual benefit from sharing one or more of the following: production costs, the members' characteristics, or a good characterised by excludable benefits*" This paper is not primarily concerned with modelling costs, benefits or their allocation, but the economic literature can help to characterise clubs. For example, Sandler and Tschirhart (1980:

1485) consider the effect of changing membership size and suggest that "*ca maraderie is eventually overpowered by crowding, and at that point the benefit per person begins to decline*". They also differentiate between homogeneous and heterogeneous club membership and contend that membership characteristics affect decision-making. Heterogeneous clubs might find decision-making more difficult to reach owing to the aggregation of diverse preferences (1980: 1491). Some other issues raised in the economic literature are:

Discrimination: in exclusive clubs where benefits are shared. Discrimination gives rise to some controversy where potential members are excluded for various reasons, including race, age, gender, profession or religion. For example, Pell (1988) rails against the 'closed doors' of gentlemen's clubs who do not admit women or sports clubs whose rules give priority to men.

Institutional form: clubs can be privately owned by a cooperative membership, operated for profit or publicly controlled by government (Buchanan, 1965: 7).

Crowding: the extent of crowding in establishments of fixed capacity and variable attendance.

Multiproduct clubs: for example, country clubs that provide a golf course, swimming pool and room for social events. Sandler and Tschirhart (1980) question if the complementarity of many products is more complex in such clubs. In hotels, for example, to what extent does a gym or a spa attract potential customers and to what extent are they used?

Membership: heterogeneous or homogeneous? Should a club appeal to many or the few? How might that affect the voluntary cooperations of people for mutual advantage?

Hospitality literature

Peacock and Selvarajah (2000:234) remark that "*private social clubs are simply hospitality businesses without names or numbers on their doors*". Therefore, it may be assumed that the skills of hospitality management apply to running private clubs as well as hotels and restaurants.

There is a wealth of literature about private clubs in the USA, where the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) has members in about 3,000 such clubs (Kim et al, 2011). This has increased in recent years and Peacock and Selvarajah (2000) com-

mented that traditional clubs cherish a commitment to privacy and this is one reason why they are so rarely investigated. But Singerling et al's (1997) findings included the reluctance of US private clubs to participate in research. They include country clubs, golf clubs, city dining/athletic clubs, yacht clubs and other clubs. Perhaps because of this professional organisation there is considerable literature about US club issues, such as competencies for club managers (Koeningsfeld et al, 2010), food and beverage levels during the 2008-2010 economic downturn in clubs (Herreira et al, 2012), yield management opportunities for private club managers (Barth, 2002) and food and beverage training in private clubs (Barrows, 2000). This suggests a greater lever of association and sophistication than in the UK, where traditional clubs are more independent and organised. Barrows and Walsh (2002) remark that, compared to other English-speaking countries, there is no shortage of information pertaining to private clubs, including professional research studies, thus strengthening the relationship between club and hospitality management.

In many countries (for example the United Kingdom and Australia) clubs must be registered with the authorities as bona fide, non-profit making organisations, as their legal obligations may be different from the norm (for example in liquor licensing regulations). Buuitjens and Howard (2001) note that clubs are governed by a board of directors and a manager/secretary who is responsible for day-to-day running.

Modelling traditional clubs

As shown in Figure 4, the literature synthesis proposes that the ethos of clubs' private membership is often based on tradition and genesis, in the nine categories suggested in Figure 2. Once formed, it is the membership through committees that drives the governance and strategy of traditional clubs over time. Paid officers (for example the Secretary and support hospitality staff) are employed to enable the wishes of members in the future, through the committees. This situation contrasts with the role of hospitality managers in restaurants and hotels whose task it is to develop a product and service strategy and to deliver this through operations.
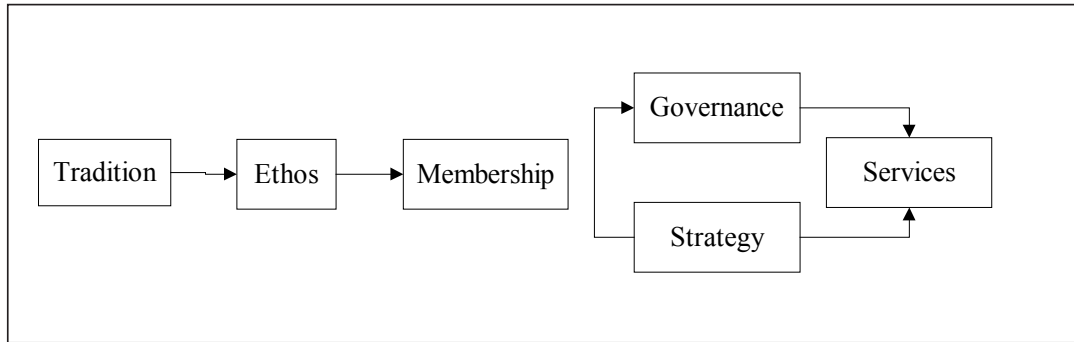
Figure 4: A model of the elements of traditional clubs

Table 1 summarises the key differences between traditional clubs and hotels. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that traditional club management is employing more hospitality professionals in an attempt to improve services to members and the effective management of their considerable properties. This contention will need to be explored in further research.

Table 1: Contrasting traditional clubs and hotels

	Traditional clubs	Hotels
Tradition	• Public school • University, armed forces, professional	• Wide social class • Tradition based on organisational culture
Ethos	• Retains largely original purpose • Attracts members • Extension of the home	• Adapts to markets/brands • Attracts guests according to branding, location and pricing
Membership	• Elitist, sometimes male only • Closed to public • Self-selecting • Limited or fixed numbers • Escape to a comfort zone	• Pluralist • Open to public • Fewer restrictions • Numbers fixed by capacity • Offers an accommodation and food experience
Governance	• Run by committee/board • Manager employed by board • Explicit rules	• Management team • General manager • Standard operating procedures
Strategy	• Status quo • Financial security • Non-profit • Unchanging in a changing world	• Present and future oriented • Business performance • Profit • Adapting to the market environment
Services	• Comfort food • Wide range of low-cost wines	• Cater for residents and locals • Limited wines with commercial markup

CONCLUSION

It is disappointing to note that traditional clubs have not been the focus of much academic explorations and this paper seeks to begin to address this gap. Clubs developed in London from coffeehouses in the seventeenth century and became places of talk, social association and business. The Victorian period saw the greatest growth in clubs, which became more associated with social class and as an 'oasis' or an 'escape' from home or work. On a more practical level, clubs provided accommodation and food for members away from home, just like hotels.

There is no definitive information, but there are approximately 50 clubs in the London area at the time of writing. Their origins may be classified into 9 groups, with an even spread across each category.

The secondary research methodology draws upon the disciplines of sociology, economics and hospitality management. Literature definitions reinforce the notion of clubs as places of association for a common interest, be it for sport, business or social interaction. Clubs are private and not open to the general public and may be regarded as elitist and closed organisations. The sociology literature addresses how a sense of community can be engendered with feelings of interdependence. Cohesion also derives from different types of social capital which can flourish where like-minded individuals congregate. The economic literature addresses a theory of clubs in which resources are shared. Traditional clubs may be regarded as homogeneous organisations, where decision-making is comparatively easy and where camaraderie is ensured by discriminative members to avoid overcrowding. The hospitality literature addresses the skills necessary to provide the standards of food, accommodation, premises and other services which members might demand.

The paper proposes a model of the elements of traditional clubs, in which tradition is often maintained over time. Clubs developed an ethos based upon their genesis, and it is the members (through their paid officials) who are responsible for the governance and strategy of the institutions and the services which are offered. There are a number of commonalities and contrasts between services at traditional clubs and hotels, with the skills of hospitality management needed in both activities.

Further research

The aim of this paper is to provide the conceptual underpinning for a descriptive model of traditional clubs, which have existed for several centuries but whose nature is unclear. This can help to start the debate about the validity of this model as well as to encourage primary research within traditional clubs. Such research might consider the following issues:

What benefits might members derive from club membership?

Is there a difference from running a club and a hotel?

Why do employees choose to work in clubs rather than other hospitality organisations?

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