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Name: Ciaran Kavanagh

Student Number: 17478644

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1

Drinking in the Dark: An exploration into the possible changes in "pub culture" over the last three decades in Ireland from an insider's viewpoint.

By: Ciaran Kavanagh

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Submitted to:
The National College of Ireland
In partial fulfilment of MSc. Entrepreneurship
MSCENTD

Supervisor: Dr. April Hargreaves

Abstract

This study highlights the cultural changes that have occurred in the Irish pub culture from the perspective of the people who work in the industry while also looking at the causes of these changes. The primary reason for carrying out this research was to investigate the changes in the Irish pub culture and to understand the current pub culture that the publicans believe exists in Ireland today. As time has gone by, Ireland's pub culture has changed as new generations emerged and began consuming alcohol in different ways and places. Pub culture was examined through the lens of the industry workers who have seen the changes occur during their time in the industry over several years.

By conducting three in-depth interviews with the industry workers, discovering new insights into why the pub culture has changed became clear. Qualitative research methods were deployed in order to gather the most accurate data. With this, three main themes were brought forward in the interviews, helping answer the research questions and objectives of this study.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the Master of Science in Entrepreneurship, is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfilment for that stated above.

Signed <u>Ciaran Kavanagh</u>   Date <u>14/08/21</u>(Candidate)

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Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and thanks for my supervisor Dr. April Hargreaves. The support and guidance received throughout the process of the dissertation has been invaluable.

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Another special mention I would like to acknowledge is the patience, help and support I have gotten throughout the long process of not only completing this dissertation, but the 4 years I have spent in my third level education.

Lastly, I would like to show my sincere appreciation for those who took part in the study in terms of the interviews. Without them, this dissertation would not have been possible. Their insight and knowledge was fascinating to hear about to say the least.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with Irish pub culture, which is a topic the primary researcher has a strong interest in and passion about. This research focuses on the viewpoint of the people who are directly involved in the industry, specifically the owners of the pubs of Ireland, the publicans.

Firstly, the researcher will look into the existing literature that is concerned with pub culture. The researcher will begin to explore the different types of culture and approaches to creating a culture in a country while also applying these approaches to the Irish pub culture. The main purpose of this research is to identify the elements that create the Irish pub culture, and secondly, to explore if the pub culture of Ireland has changed over the years and between generations. Thirdly, the author aims to identify the different aspects that can cause a change in the Irish pub culture such as the medias influence, the availability of alcohol and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The next section of the research will look at the methodology aspect of the study, as well as the research objectives and the research questions of the study. Within this section, the author will explain and rationalise the reason for their approach to this study. The type of research being conducted will be discussed, as well as, looking at the selected approach, the research onion, and what it entails. Following this, a deeper look into the research objectives and questions will be explored to set out what the researcher is attempting to understand and answer throughout this study.

The following section is an additional secondary data section. This was included to give context to the industry being studied, such as the different aspects to the Irish pub industry such as consumption rates, taxes and regulations on alcohol. This is a quantitative based section and the reason for the inclusion of this section is to allow the reader to understand the background information associated with pub culture in Ireland.

The second last section is concerned with the findings and analysing the data obtained by the researcher. Here the author will compare the data obtained first-hand with the current literature available in this area of study.

The last section of the study will aim to conclude what has been discussed. Here, the researcher will set out to answer the research questions and objectives, while also highlighting the certain limitations and areas for further investigation by future researchers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In Ireland, there is and always has been, a culture directly associated with alcohol consumption (Ramstedt & Hope, 2002). We will first establish a theoretical definition to understand "culture". This is important for us to be able to apply this term to "pub culture" and adapt it in order to suit the narrative of this study. This chapter begins by looking into what is needed to create a culture. The researcher examines the different theoretical approaches and will lay the foundations for what makes a distinct "pub culture" in Ireland.

The chapter will go on to look into the alcohol industry as a whole. By this, we will classify and distinguish the different elements and sections of the industry. The term "hospitality industry" is used frequently as a blanket term that incorporates the various sections of the service industry. This includes branches such as food & drink services, lodging and event planning (Hemmington, 2007). The main focal point of this research is to inspect this area in Ireland, particularly focusing on the capital and the most densely populated areas.

Following this, the chapter leads into the areas that are shaping this industry and the reasons why the industry is in its current state. While this research is based on investigating pub culture and its changes, it is of great importance to understand what influences a consumer's choice. With everything people purchase, there is always a motive and reason as to why they choose to purchase something over an alternative (Bronner & de Hoog, 2021). Within this chapter, we will explore the different avenues of consumer choice, taste and experience as well as looking at the distinct behaviour's consumers display when making choices on purchases and places to go. Again, this is important as it lays a clear foundation to understand why people may choose to go to one pub over the other or perhaps not go at all.

Progressing through the chapter, a look at the medias portrayal of the Irish drinking culture and understanding of the Irish "bar scene" and how that has shaped the public's perception of the industry in question. In addition to this, investigating the impact that the sale of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licenses has had on the drinking culture in Ireland. As well as this, with a more recent and relevant area of discussion, we will look into the impact Covid-19 has had on the hospitality industry as a whole and examine how this has accelerated a change in "pub culture" in Ireland (PwC, 2020).

2.2 Creating a culture

Defining culture is of utmost importance in conducting this study. We can define culture as a set of characteristics and common knowledge amongst a certain set or group of people that includes things like language, cuisine, religion, social habits and arts (Yasavievna, 2021). The term "social habits" directly encompasses the base of this study around the pub culture and pub scene which is important as a steppingstone to understanding it. While definitions and opinions can be formed from research around culture, not one definition is widely and commonly accepted by all researchers as culture is a very subjective and a hard term to "outrightly define" due to this complexity (Taras, et al., 2009).

When we look at approaches to theoretical culture and interoperating culture, there are three main approaches to consider. These are functionalists, conflict theorists and interactionalist. Each of these have their own way of viewing culture and dissecting it.

2.2.1 Functional Theorists

For these types of interpreters, they tend to view society in terms of aspects working together in order to create the society as a complete system (Wilson, 2020). Due to this, every society needs a culture to exist. The certain cultural patterns work in order to assist a smooth running of society. As well as that, the cultural values people of these societies hold will in turn, directly influence people making choices (Lumen Learning, 2019). Similar to the way the people of a society work in conjunction to fulfil the needs of their society, culture works to satisfy the core needs of the society's members.

An important aspect to note of the functionalist approach is that values play a key role in the study. With that, it means the value that the society holds on certain things, such as education. The culture surrounding education coincides with the values the members of society place on education, which can be said for here in Ireland as education is valued by society as a whole (Burke, 2018).

2.2.2 Conflict Theorists

These theorists differ from functionalists. At their core, it sees society and its structure as constantly unequal due to power that is based on things such as gender, social class, age and race (Lumen Learning, 2019). In a cultural sense for these theorists, they see culture as a way of reinforcing issues around "privilege" for certain members of that society based on age, race, and sex. By this, we mean that if there is a society dominated by men, the women of this society are striving for equality or in society, the older groups of people are trying to hold on to their rights, healthcare etc. from the younger generation governing and making their laws (Lumen

Learning, 2019). Naturally, these inequalities exist in all societies in every part of the world. While not all the inequalities are the same for each part of the world, it is all relevant. For example, women in Islamic based countries have very few rights afforded to them and inequality for women compared to men is drastic. This is, however, completely minimalised in Christian based countries, such as the U.S or Western Europe (Michalopoulos, et al., 2016).

2.2.3 Interactional Theorists

This view and outlook on culture deals with the way in which the people of society interact with one another. Culture is created and maintained by the actions of the people in the society (Das, 1988). Supporters of this theory understand that the continuous interactions of the people in this society as a way of creating meaning from objects in the environment as well as the actions of others in the society. Overall, the people who feel strongly about this theoretical approach believe that culture is a strongly dynamic and fluid due to the dependence on how the meaning is received by the individuals and how those individuals express themselves upon expressing such meanings (Lumen Learning, 2019).

2.2.4 Pub & Drinking culture

While these theories are mainly based around culture as a whole and in accordance with society, the relevance is still the same for the understanding of "pub culture" in Ireland. By understanding what makes a culture different from one another, and more importantly what are the drivers of cultural change and adaption, it allows to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and how it applies to this study. When looking into the Irish "pub culture" we have a foundation to understand the importance of this culture to Irish society as a whole. The problem with the current literature around the subject is that it is very minimal at present. As highlighted by Saleeba (2018), the concept around drinking culture is "ill-defined", however, the number of academic articles that contain the term "drinking culture" has been steadily rising since the start of the 2000's. In conjunction with this, Savic, et al. (2016), supports this claim by acknowledging the number of both anthropological and sociological literature which exists on the subject around culture but there is a lack of concrete research surrounding drinking culture as a whole, along with the implications of certain drinking cultures in comparison to that of other countries.

When we look at the case conducted by Sargent (1968) about Australian drinking culture, she makes it clear that within Australian drinking culture, there are a number of "value orientations". Tolerance, disapproval of "wowsers", the ideal of self-control and moderation in all things, conformity and belief in equality and stress on the adult male role are the pillars of

these value orientations (Sargent, 1968). Further within Sargent's research, she concludes that there are eight general orientations that are the basis for drinking culture amongst Australians. These are interpreted as *"drinking as a symbol of mate ship and social solidarity (especially in adult male drinking); drinking for social ease (particularly in home entertaining and cocktail parties); drinking as utilitarian (hence it is acceptable to use alcohol to 'drown one's sorrows'); excessive drinking as socially more acceptable as an outlet for deviance than, for example, delinquent acts or schizophrenia; drinking as virile behaviour; 'holding one's liquor' as also virile; adults' opinion that adolescent drinking should as far as possible be supervised; disapproval of heavy drinking and drunkenness in women"* (Sargent, 1968). While some of these views are typically outdated, much of the principles remain the same, even though Australia's society has changed in terms of drinking and consuming alcohol (Savic, et al., 2016). However, it is important to note that these "generalisations" will not apply to all divisions of society. As per Sargent (1968), there are certain parts of society that the drinking culture applies more to than others. This view is further explored by Gmel, et al (2007) when their study of drinking culture indicates that when referring to "national drinking culture" it is usually making a reference to the men of that society.

It is important to note that while discussing the work of Sargent (1968), we are exploring work conducted around the Australian society. It is important to note this as not all cultures and societies operate the same. There are cultural differences that exist from country to country, and not all of the principles apply universally to all cultures (Aresi, et al., 2021). While it would have been more fitting to use an example which explores drinking culture in Ireland, there have been no studies conducted here like the study by Sargent in 1968.

2.3 The Industry as a whole

As aforementioned, the hospitality industry is a broad area that incorporates different elements of the industry under one common term. By looking at this, we are able to breakdown the different terms and subcategories to establish a strong understanding of this industry as a whole, as well as creating the foundations for this study.

Firstly, when looking into the area of public house/pubs and bars, which include gastro pubs, we can see a repeat term of "on trade license" being used. As per Gordon (2010), this is a license that must be held by the pubs in order to sell and serve alcoholic products on their premises. Like any other business sector or industry, there are competitors and competition

exists (Casarin, et al., 2020). There is, however, a target audience that must be established by the pub or bar. It is important that when a business is operating, they must first decide the target audience and market they are looking to attract in order to optimise their chances of being successful (Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2021). For Irish pubs, it is no different. They must establish themselves in a certain area and brand themselves as such. For example, what type of bar are they? Are they a cocktail bar or a traditional Irish bar? Each type of pub typically attracts a certain and distinct type of group. In addition to this, there are certain pubs known as an "early house" which refers to their license allowing them to serve alcohol outside the normal hours of operation. These bars, however, are not common and have declined dramatically (O'Riordan, 2019). For the purposes of this study, we will focus on the "normal" pub standard operating times. This is defined by Kümin & Tlusty (2002) as "the regular sale of alcohol for consumption on publicly accessible premises. Even though all pubs & bars generally provide the same overall service and purpose, they each create their own distinct value for their customers (Huang, et al., 2018). Thus, this creates a different view of the characteristics and perceptions in the mind of consumers linked to different pubs and types of bars. While trying to create our own understanding and definition of this pub & bar industry, it is important to note the tendencies of other reports and studies where they gather their own definition of the industry. As such, many previous works have used the CSO "Accommodation and Food, and beverages Service Activities" definition and grouping of pubs & bars.

2.3.1 The Hospitality industry in Ireland

When looking at the hospitality industry, we will begin to see the strength and capacity of the industry together. As stated by Morrissey & McCarthy (2018), not only is there close to 7,200 pubs with a license operating throughout the whole country, but it is an important and influential part of Ireland's entire hospitality market. In relation to the Irish economy, it is evident that the hospitality industry holds a strong level of contribution. Within the last 10 years, the industry has been directly responsible for 12.3% of the total employment increase across the country from 2012 to 2019 (Foley, 2019).

As mentioned above, the significance this sector has on the employment sector is strong. In particular, female workers, part-time workers, and skilled elementary workers are some of the main beneficiaries of the hospitality industry and possess the bulk of the jobs held (Foley, 2019). Additionally, the hospitality industry provides a key opportunity of employment for the economically less advantaged socio-demographic groups (Foley, 2019). This is particularly prominent in areas such as rural Ireland where the economic opportunities are significantly less

than in Dublin. As such, the hotels, pubs and restaurants provide a much-needed essential service to the rural areas as a core source of employment for the residents of these areas (Foley, 2019). Below, figure 1 shows the pub trade industry as a whole as of 2017.
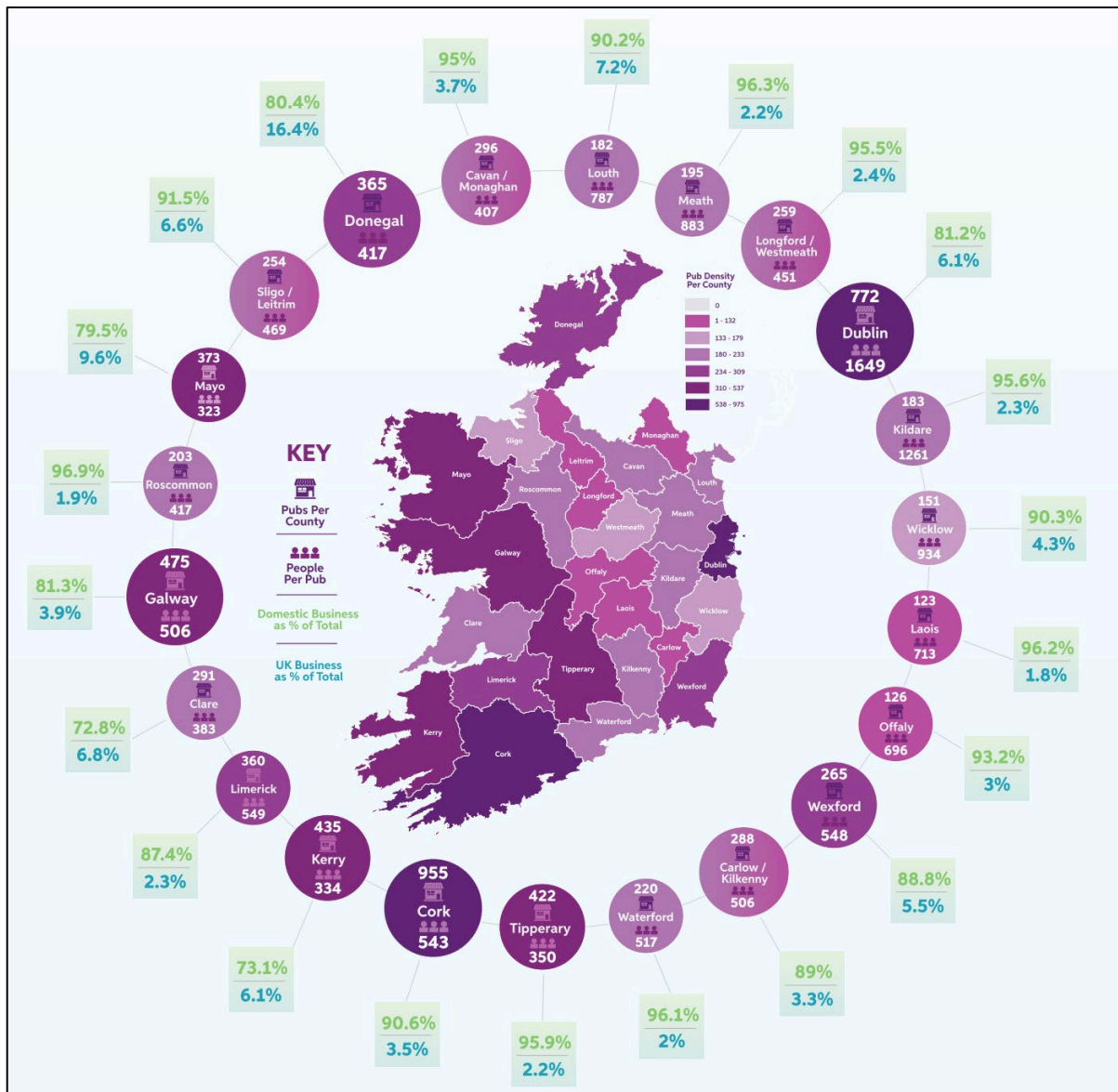

Figure 1 - Complete look of Irish pub trade 2017 (Morrissey & McCarthy, 2018)

2.4 Consumer Behaviour

In this section, dissecting and understanding consumer behaviour and the role it plays in people's purchasing habits will be discussed. It is important to look into consumer behaviour as it gives us an in-depth look at the actions of society and more importantly, why they make these actions. According to Solomon et al. (2006), consumer behaviour is linked directly to the process that is followed when groups or individuals select, purchase, use and dispose of both products and services, as well as ideas or experiences, in order for them to satisfy their needs and desires. With this, we can also look at consumer perception process which is activated through different stimulus such as sights, smells, sounds, tastes and different textures. As a result, a consumer's attention is drawn to one or more of these stimuli and thus, results in them interpreting a product, causing a reaction and resulting in a formed conception of said product (Forbes-Bell, et al., 2020). We can apply these principles of perception directly into the sale of alcohol, particularly when in a pub or bar. In all bars, restaurants, pubs and even off-licenses, all alcohol companies compete with each other to attract customers to their particular brand of alcohol. For example, while most lagers look the same and are indistinguishable when looking at the actual contents of the lager, the companies use their branding, colour of the bottle, labels and other visuals to attract their target customer to choose their brand over the competitor's. As per Allison & Uhl (1964), consumers usually explain their attractiveness to a product due to the "physical attributes of the product". It is important that this is made clear in this study as the investigation involves why people choose one thing over another. It can be whether a person decides to consume alcohol or a non-alcoholic beverage or it can be a case of what motivates a consumer to choose pub A over pub B or neither.

2.4.1 Consumer Decision-Making Process

Simply put, the consumers decision making process is the active method consumers use to become aware of their needs, as well as identifying those needs while they also gather information on how they feel they can best meet said needs. They also weigh up and compare their available options before they make a decision to purchase and follow it up be evaluating their purchase and how best that purchase has met their needs (Kotler & Keller, 2016). While there are a plethora of different theories and approaches around the subject of consumer decision-making process, there seems to be a general consensus that this "process" has a number of different steps the decision maker goes through in order to reach their decision. For the purpose of this study, the model being referenced is the five-stage model of consumer

buying process that is discussed by Kotler & Keller (2016) as well as Solomon et al. (2006). This model can be seen in Figure 2 below:

Problem Recognition	• Daniel realises he's fed up with black-and-white TV that has bad sound reproduction
Information Search	• Daniel talks to a few friends about buying a new TV.
Evaluation of Alternatives	• Daniel compares several models in the store in terms of reputation and available features.
Product Choice	• Daniel chooses one model because it has a feature that really appeals to him.
Outcomes	• Daniel brings home the TV and enjoys his purchase.

Figure 2 - Consumer Decision Making Process (Solomon, et al., 2006)

With this model, we can see that it is a linear approach to the decision-making process. With this, however, not all of these steps will be done in order or some steps may even be skipped completely. As well as that, consumers may return to a previous step should something change, such as learning new information (Kotler & Keller, 2016). From the figure above, we are able to discuss these steps in more detail to understand their relevance to the study.

Problem recognition

At the first step of the process the consumer has become aware of a "problem" which they have deemed requires some action. Desires, needs and wants are driven from either an external or internal stimulus, or in some cases both (Mormann, et al., 2020). Essentially, the consumer has a feeling of unsatisfaction with their current product or service. This step in the process is one of the most key steps as if there is no identified need, the consumer will usually not continue on to the next step, unless there is an impulse purchase taking place (Solomon, et al., 2006).

Information search

In the second step in the process, this is where the consumer begins to see what options are out there in the products and services they are looking for. There are several things that help a consumer set their parameters in the search, such as price, brand and influence of other people

(Solomon, et al., 2006). The actual information gathering process can be done by a number of ways. Years ago, this was simply done by walking from store-to-store whereas now it is possible for people to use the internet to browse different options. As well as that, people gather subconscious information by what the people around their demographic are doing and this may influence their decision (Lee & Jung, 2020). In addition to this, the customer begins to weigh up pros and cons to see which decision may best satisfy their needs.

Evaluation of Alternatives

Thirdly, the consumer moves on to the evaluation stage of the process. As of now, the consumer has gathered information on their potential options and is able to begin to narrow down on what it is they really need and want from the product or service in question. The set of possible options is known as the "evoked set". This is the options the consumer is faced with and is made up of the options he/she has in their memory as well as those that are in the retail environment, such as online or in-store (Solomon, et al., 2006). Like most people, a lot of consumers have a degree of brand loyalty. With consumer decision-making, it is no different and certain consumers will lean towards a particular brand due to positive experience with that brand. In addition to this, Ulgado & Lee (1998) argue that the consumer here will use the intrinsic product cues to assist them in choosing the products and services that are accessible to them.

Purchase Decision

At this stage, the consumer has chosen their brand and product/service and has decided to purchase. Importantly, there are two main factors that adjust a purchase. The first one being the attitudes of people, highlighting the ease in which a consumer can be influenced. By this it is meant that the closer and more trusting the consumer is with a person, the more influence that person will have on the final purchase decision (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The second factor is unanticipated situational factors and perceived risk. For the perceived risk, it can be contributed to numerous things such as functional, physical, financial, social and psychological (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In addition to this perceived risk, Palazon & Delgado-Ballester (2013) accept that consumers also consider how valuable and interesting a product is before they actually purchase the product or service. On the other hand, however, we as people are also influenced by our cultural beliefs when looking for products and will avoid or be drawn to certain products depending on this (Solomon, et al., 2006).

Post purchase behaviour

The final stage of the decision-making process lands here. After the purchase of the product or service, the consumer reflects to see if their purchase has satisfied their needs and wants (Mormann, et al., 2020). This is a key area for both consumer and company as if the product has met their needs and expectations, the consumer's chances of purchasing this product again has increased. If, however, the product did not meet the expectations of the consumer, it is unlikely they will return to this product. In their own self-interest, company's often reach in order to get feedback on the consumer's purchase with the aim to generate a strong brand loyalty to that customer (Solomon, et al., 2006).

2.4.2 Deciding on alcohol

This decision-making process is an important aspect to understand the thought process that occurs when people are deciding on what to purchase, who to purchase it from and where to purchase. This is relevant to this study in question as we can gain a deeper understanding of how people think and feel when deciding where to consume their alcohol, as well as what alcohol to consume which is all part of the "pub culture". While the above process is a very simplistic and broad way of looking at the process, it gives us the needed foundations.

According to Reich & Goldman (2015), research has been done for three decades from the viewpoint that people's decision to drink alcohol is through cognition. Furthermore, a common use of words of like beliefs, reasons, motives, and attitudes are all used in academia when discussing the different things that motivate people to consume alcohol. A general view of two primary reasons for people drinking alcohol exists. People generally drink for one of two reasons, first being in order to reduce and cope with stress and the second is people drink due to the influence of their social settings (Abbey, et al., 1993). While this is an important aspect to note, most people are unaware of their reasoning for consuming alcohol as they do not entirely grasp the process their brain goes through subconsciously (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). People are not entirely sure as to why they do or do not consume alcohol, Cooper et al. (1988) insist the feedback people give to researchers holds significant value in understanding the people's psychological level when they are consuming alcohol.

In terms of the areas that sparks a motivation amongst people to go to the pub to consume alcohol, there are a number of reasons. Firstly, as per Kehoe (2020) Irish pubs are now the number one destination for tourists to go when visiting Ireland. This comes from a study performed by Dublin City University that 83% of tourists say they look forward to "listening to Irish music in a pub". This gives us an understanding of their motivation which is the Irish

music. This ties directly in with another proclaimed motivation by Kehoe (2020) is that people visit Irish pubs in order to enjoy and experience the atmosphere of these pubs. Irish pubs have been known around the world for their relaxed and inviting culture and whether it is the locals and residents of Ireland or visiting tourists, this atmosphere is prominent in most traditional Irish pubs (Ireland Calling, 2020).

2.4.3 The Importance for pubs & bars

As touched on previously, Irish pubs are extremely important for not only Irish culture and the economy, but they also provide a major importance for the people of Ireland. This industry has been of great importance for both Ireland and the U.K since they were founded (Cabras & Mount, 2016). The people of the U.K and Ireland have relied on these public houses for a number of reasons. Relieving stress, socialising and building relationships are a few named according to Cabras & Mount (2016). Similarly, the pubs hold a special importance for people's wellbeing and communal cohesion, particularly in rural communities as it provides a chance for communities to interact (Cabras & Mount, 2017). In addition to this importance, Alasuutari (1985) makes a particular note to the importance pubs have held for men with their post-work stress relief mechanism. Men have used pubs and public houses since their establishment as a way of coping with mental stress from life and work and the same principles have carried on for generations (Alasuutari, 1985).

2.5 Media's Portrayal of drinking culture

Ireland's drinking culture is something that has always been questioned by both the local media, as well as the global media outlets (Hogan, 2020). Ireland has been famous for many alcoholic beverages. From Guinness, to traditional Irish whiskey and even poitín (similar to American Moonshine), Ireland has always had a reputation as a drinking nation (Your Irish, 2019). Many of these media outlets refer to Ireland's relationship with alcohol as a bad one. Ganatra (2019) refers to the people of Ireland having an "over-dependence" on drinking alcohol for a sense of relief and acceptance with the rest of the nation. The relationship is also deemed to be complex and unhealthy for future generations of the Irish people (Ganatra, 2019). There is a strong consensus of shame when looking at the different media outlets when looking at the Irish drinking culture. When looking at more Irish based media portrayals, such as Ball (2017) who refers to the Irish drinking culture as a "tragic comedy" or looking at Collins (2015) when he makes note to the drinking culture as being real but very embarrassing for the people of Ireland.

2.6 The selling of alcohol outside the pub

Another area of investigation for this study is looking into the availability of alcohol in places such as off-licenses and supermarkets at a largely reduced price and investigating what effect this has had on the pubs and the pub culture in Ireland. The problem with the availability of alcohol in places such as supermarkets is that it makes it nearly impossible for pubs to compete with the low prices being offered by the off-sale stores. In an article by Gross (2016), he believes that supermarkets selling alcohol at such cheap, and often below cost, is slowly killing the bar trade across Europe. Things like licensing, strict regulations and legislation are all costs and factors the supermarkets and off-licenses do not have to consider when selling the alcoholic products. On top of these low prices the supermarket have to offer, in Ireland, there has been a vast increase of 40% more "take home" alcohol being purchased in supermarkets by the public of Ireland (Bowers, 2020). This extra take home consumption suggests a change in people's drinking habits, as they are choosing to drink at home instead of going out to public houses as frequently. As well as this, a study conducted in the U.K in 2014 has accredited 70% of all alcohol sales in the country being from the off-sale sector, again, suggesting that more and more people are beginning to drink at home rather than drinking in the pubs as only 30% of the alcohol consumed was in the pubs and bars of the country (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2014).

2.5 Impact of Covid-19 on the industry

The impact of this pandemic has not only affected the pub and bar industry. Globally, the pandemic has resulted in numerous repercussions. However, the pub industry was one of the most drastically hit industries. It is important to note that because of the way the Covid-19 virus operates as an airborne transmissible virus, pubs, restaurants, and nightclubs were one of the first services to be closed with immediate effect by the government (Carruthers, 2020). On top of that, Carruthers (2020) continues to point out that Ireland have been at the centre of the most prolonged lockdown restrictions in the entire EU.

An investigation was carried out by DIGI or Drinks Industry Group of Ireland on the impact of Covid-19 on their industry. This was done by conducting a survey on 1,085 drinks business owners, such as bars and restaurants. There were a number of key findings from this study, of which the researcher will discuss.

1. Firstly, at the time of this study, 50% of the pubs have had to reduce their staff permanently due to the pandemic. As well as that, 52% of those surveyed are anticipating they will need to let even more staff go in the future. This is further driven

as 80% of the employers who had already cut their staff have admitted it is due to their reduced demand and capabilities with the restrictions (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020).

2. A second key finding in their study shows that 1/3 of the people surveyed have expressed that their business has a moderate chance that the business will be forced to close permanently.

3. Thirdly, some of the places permitted to reopen under restrictions have reported losses. As of the survey, one in four people reported that they had a greater than 50% drop in trade in comparison to the previous year while an extra 40% said that they Covid-19 restrictions had resulted in a 60% drop off in their profits (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020).

4. Alarmingly, 60% of pub owners said they would struggle if tasked with finding another job that was not within the hospitality industry. As well as that 15% of publicans have said they are in debt of €50,000 or more due to the pandemic (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020).

5. One of the most notable discoveries of the survey is that 90% of the publicans surveyed believe the government do not fully understand the challenges the owners face for their on-trade business.

6. With note to point number 5, 60% of publicans said the government-based subsidy for pub owners only covers 20% of their costs at most per month (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020).

2.6 Conclusion

As the literature has been reviewed, it is clear to see what is currently available in the field of study. Culture is a very diverse and subjective topic. There are an array of different factors that contribute to creating a culture and distinguishing one culture to another culture (Yasavievna, 2021). The problem, however, with pub culture is that there is a lack of concrete studies completed around the topic. The actual term "drinking culture" is something that has been neglected when researchers have looked at the area surrounding a country's drinking habits and tendencies (Saleeba, 2018). The lack of a clear definition and research around the topic presents a gap in the study for the researcher to investigate. Savic et al (2016) also concludes that there is a lack of studies surround the subject of pub culture.

As looked at above, the media's evident negative portrayal on the Irish drinking culture is something that the local and national news articles have become accustom to writing about.

While the study conducted by Sargent (1968) agrees that there is numerous different factors that can influence a country's pub culture, there is yet to be any studies on determining if the media's negative portrayal of the drinking culture can in fact influence and effect that culture. The Irish drinking culture has been referred to as a "tragic comedy" and that the people of Ireland abuse alcohol substances (Ball, 2017). In addition to this, Ganatra (2019) refers to the people of Ireland's relationship with alcohol as "complex" and claiming they have an "over-reliance" on alcohol. Again, no studies have yet investigated what this has done to the Irish drinking culture, to which this study aims to try and help fill this gap.

As well as this, a deeper look at what role the supermarkets have played in changing drinking culture with their off-license selling of alcohol at reduced prices has not yet been looked at. With more and more people drinking at home or consuming alcohol out of the public house, it is a fair assumption to say people's drinking habits are changing (Bowers, 2020). As of 2014 in the U.K, 70% of all alcohol sales had been contributed to the off-sale sector (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2014). To go with that, Bowers (2020) has claimed an increase of 40% in Irish people's "take home consumption". An aim of this study is to find out the influence this cheaper alcohol availability has had on the Irish drinking culture. There is a gap in the literature surrounding this impact of the off sale increasing.

Particularly, the literature possess a large gap when looking at the impact of these changes from an internal perspective, the publicans. The changes have yet to be understood and investigated from this internal perspective. Due to this, the researcher's study aims to explore the perceptions if the Irish publicans on the main areas that seem to be driving the drinking culture change in Ireland.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this third chapter, the researcher will identify and examine the research question, as well as the sub-questions accompanying the main research question. Along with discussing the research questions, throughout this chapter the researcher will review the methodological approach that will be adopted for the purpose of this study. Methodology is simply the way in which a researcher systemically creates and structures a research topic in order to guarantee they get the most reliable and accurate results that deal with the aims and objectives of the research topic (Reddy, 2020). It looks at how the researcher decided on certain elements like what data is to be collected, who should the researcher collect it from, how to collect said data and lastly, how should the data be analysed (Reddy, 2020). With all methodology, it introduces a rationale and reasoning for the choice of method and why it is best suited for the research.

For the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary data was collected. While the main area of this study is focused on the primary data collected, the secondary data allows the researcher and the readers to compare the two sets of data collected to see if a correlation can be made with the two.

An important aspect to many research studies is ensuring the results are accurate and valid (Parks, 2021). To help the researcher adhere to this important aspect, they adopted the Research Onion Framework. This particular framework of research was created by Saunders et al (2007) and allows the author to have a structured and well-defined research method section. In addition to that, this chapter will also contain an in-depth look at the other research designs, tools and data collection methods. The aim is to clarify and strengthen the reasoning for choosing this particular research structure and show why it is the best approach for the study. The approach taken in this study, ultimately, is a qualitative approach. As the chapter progresses, the author will take you through the reasoning behind choosing this qualitative approach and in conjunction with the reasoning, will show the differences between a qualitative and quantitative approach to researching a topic.

3.2 Research Questions

With this research, creating primary questions and sub-questions facilitates guiding the researcher in a structured direction for this dissertation. It is important that research objectives are offered with a clear vision that has the ability to be examined and the research questions

must be explored and not measured (Malhotra, et al., 2017). The main area in question for this research is to investigate if there has been a change in the Irish pub culture from the perspective of people in the alcohol industry. This is where the basis of these research objectives have come from. The research objectives are the precise actions that will take place in order to answer the research question (Lester, et al., 2021). The research question, or questions, must also be able to be confirmed or refuted.

3.2.1 Primary Research Question

The primary area in question for this research is the change, or possible change, in the pub culture in Ireland. With this, the pub culture can be investigated in a time frame of three decades (30 years) in order to get the best view on if the pub culture has changed numerous times, once, or not at all. It is natural that as time passes, things naturally change. Whether that be due to new technology, new regulations and new preferences developing. As such, the primary research question has been developed:

"Has Ireland's pub culture changed throughout the last three decades?"

This primary question links directly with the title of this dissertation. This primary question allows the researcher to put forward views on culture (Kotler & Keller, 2016), as well as the drivers of change when it comes to pub culture in Ireland (Calvo-Porral & Levy-Mangin, 2019).

3.2.2 Sub-research questions

The researcher felt it was important to develop some further questions that will help answer the main research question. These questions help to narrow the focus. These secondary questions can be observed below:

1. Is there an association between how the media portrays Irish drinking culture and public perception of pubs in Ireland?
2. Is there a relationship between the selling of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licenses, and changes in the drinking culture in Ireland?
3. What impact did Covid-19 have on the alcohol industry in Ireland?

The construction of the above sub-questions directly relate to the change in the pub culture in Ireland. The questions put forward allow the researcher to discover if these have had a contribution in changing the pub culture in Ireland, if it has changed that is.

The first of the sub questions looks at the media in Ireland and examines if they have had a role in people's perception of pubs in Ireland. This question relates back to the primary question, exploring the media's view on pub culture and seeing if they are in agreement with each other. Does the media's portrayal have anything to do with the public's view?

In the second sub-question it highlights a possible factor and reason for a change in culture. The researcher aims to find out if the selling of alcohol off-sale has anything to do with the pub culture change in Ireland.

Thirdly, the last question brings in a more recent development and relevant factor to the pub industry, that is, Covid-19. As per PwC (2020), the hospitality sector is one of worst effected industries due to Covid-19 and as a pub falls into this hospitality sector, it is important to investigate the extent of this impact it has caused.

3.3 Research Objectives

In order to answer both the primary research question and accompanied sub-questions, the author of this study decided to create the following research objectives:

3.3.1 Research Objective 1

To examine if the Irish pub culture has changed from the industry worker's point of view.

The first of the objectives in this study is look at the changes in Irish pub culture with a focus on the viewpoint of the people working in the industry. As the literature has suggested, there are numerous factors that contribute to a culture (Yasavievna, 2021). There is, however, an evident gap in this research when it comes to pub culture. As Saleeba (2018) concludes that the term "drinking culture" is an ill-defined and relatively unexplored subject in the current academia. This is where the gap in the study has appeared. As well as this, it is backed up by Savic et al (2016) that while there is many studies around the subject culture, there is few surrounding the pub culture subject, particularly a qualitative outlook. By carrying out this research, the researcher will attempt to uncover what is the pub culture and how has it changed according to people working in the industry.

3.3.2 Research Objective 2

To understand the impact the media's portrayal of Irish drinking culture has on the perception of pub culture.

The second research objective is concerned with finding a link between the media's opinion and representation of the Irish drinking culture and the public's perception of that culture. Essentially, does the media's opinion affect the view of others. When we look at the view of Sargent (1968), we see they make claim of numerous factors contributing to the views of drinking culture. With this research objective, the researcher is aiming to see if the media's portrayal can be another factor that influences this. Articles in the media have been written about the Irish drinking culture with a view saying that Ireland has always had an "over dependence" and "complex" relationship with alcohol (Ganatra, 2019). Another article by Ball (2017) refers to the Irish drinking culture as a "tragic comedy" again highlighting what view is being portrayed on the Irish drinking culture by the media. There has, however, been a lack of research, particularly qualitative on the subject of the media and drinking culture which this research aims to help fill this void in literature.

3.3.3 Research Objective 3

To determine the relationship between the selling of alcohol off-sale and the change in drinking culture in Ireland.

With this third research objective, the aim is to discover and determine if there is a relationship between the relatively new area of the alcohol industry, that is, the selling of alcohol off-sale. The author is investigating if this new way to purchase and consume alcohol has affected the drinking culture in Ireland. There has been reference to the increase of alcohol "take home" consumption in numerous articles throughout the years. For example, according to an article by Bowers (2020), there has been an increase of 40% in the amount people of Ireland has purchased in off-licenses and supermarkets across the country in comparison to the previous year of 2019. As well as this, in the U.K, 70% of all alcohol sales are contributed to the off-sale sector (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2014). Again, there is an evident gap in the literature here as there has been very little qualitative outlook on the impact these alcohol sales in the off-sale sector have had on the drinking culture for pubs. This study aims to help fill this gap.

3.3.4 Research Objective 4

To inspect the impact Covid-19 has had on the alcohol industry in Ireland.

The last of the research objectives looks at the alcohol industry in regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is fair to say that Covid-19 has affected all businesses across the board and will continue to shape the future for all sectors in years to come (Brammer, et al., 2020). While the pandemic has contributed to an increase in alcohol sales for off-sales areas (Bowers, 2020), it is yet to be seen the full impact of the pandemic will have on the pub industry as certain restrictions begin to be lifted (Matzopoulos, et al., 2020). Just as PwC (2020) acknowledges, the hospitality sector was the most effected industry, particularly in Ireland. This research objective will aim to discover to what extent and severity this effect will have from a qualitative viewpoint from those effected most by the pandemic who are working in the industry. Currently there is a large void in the academia surrounding this area.

3.4 The Research Process

The research process is a step-by-step process implemented by researchers in order to conduct the best standard of research for their chosen study (Berends & Deken, 2021). According to University of South Florida (2020), it is an eight-step process that involves identifying, locating, assessing, and analysing the information regarding the researcher's questions and objectives (University of South Florida, 2020). Below, a simple form of this process can be observed in seeing the steps to the research process in Figure 3.
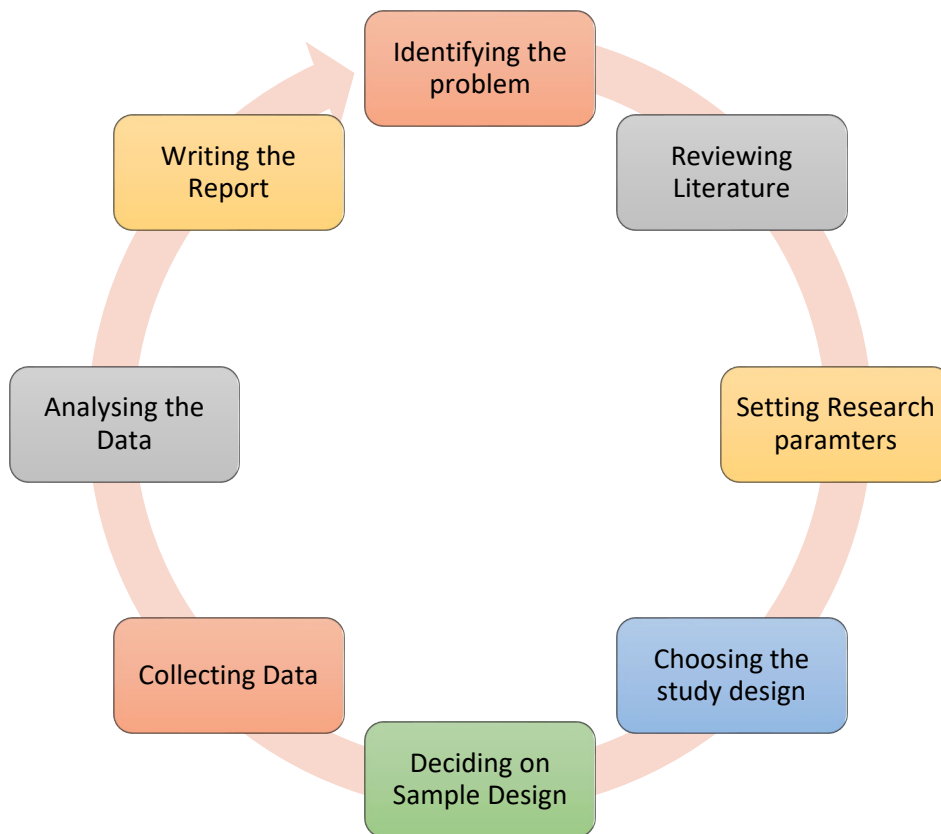
Figure 3 - Sample Research Process3.5 Research Onion (University of South Florida, 2020)

While the structure above it gives the researcher a good starting point on commencing their research, it is possible to extend this research process by using the theory developed by Saunders et al (2007) known as the research onion. The term "research onion" is used as a blanket term to describe the entire research process from the view of Saunders et al (2007). Working from the centre of the onion outward, the centre is the area where the data collection and analysis takes place and is the last step in the research onion process. The next layer represents the different time horizons in the research process. Thirdly, again, working outwards, is where the strategy is chosen for the research. Things like surveys and action

research are considered by the researcher in this area. Next, the second most outer layer is home of the different approaches such as deductive and inductive. Lastly, the different research philosophies are at the most outer layer (Saunders, et al., 2007). Typically, researcher follow the research onion by starting on the outside and move towards the centre. Below is an example of the research onion structure in Figure 4.
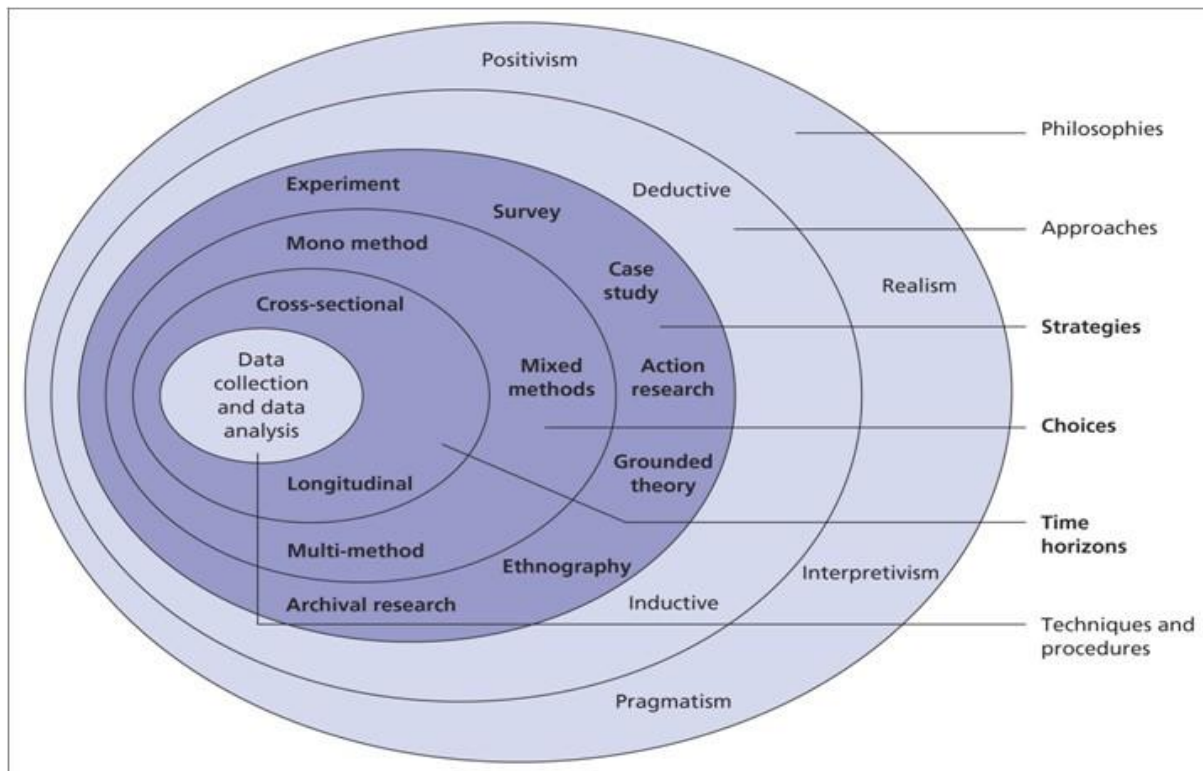
Figure 4 - The Research Onion (Saunders, et al., 2007).

3.6 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is an area of the research that looks at the source, the nature and the development of knowledge. It is essentially a belief and understanding by the researcher about an area of study and the best way the data should collected, analysed and used (Bajpai, 2011). Understanding the research philosophy is a key activity the researcher must carry out prior to selecting the research method. There a numerous different types of research philosophies and with that, each individual philosophy examines the various ways of creating and forming an appropriate and effective research methodology. While there are a number of different research philosophies, no single method can be deemed as the best approach, however, certain philosophies are more suited to certain topics and areas of research (Saunders, et al., 2007). By diving deeper into the different philosophies, Saunders et al (2012), makes reference to three main philosophies. These are ontology, epistemology and axiology.

3.6.1 Ontology

The first main philosophy mentioned by Saunders et al (2012) is the ontology philosophy. With this, there are two key characteristics that are associated with the philosophy. These are objectivism and subjectivism. With objectivism, it depicts that certain things, such as social entities, exist as a meaningful idealism that is separate to the social actors concerned with their total existence (Saunders, et al., 2012). The second aspect to ontology is subjectivism and according to Saunders et al (2012), it *"holds that social phenomena are created through the perceptions and consequent actions affected social actors"*.

3.6.2 Epistemology

The second philosophy in question is epistemology. This area lays a boundary in terms of what establishes an acceptable knowledge in a choses field of study (Saunders, et al., 2012). In a more simplistic way of understanding the philosophy, it is a way of viewing the world we live in and trying to make logical sense of it all (Crotty, 1998). As well as this there are two epistemologies that must be taken into consideration, these are positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is mainly focused around a direct experience with things and keeps away from speculation and things that are not known. With this knowledge, it is said that things must be measured and supported with strong evidence, especially with the phenomena (Pham, 2019). Overall, positivism is stemmed with the association with natural science (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Looking at interpretivism, however, it is focused on different detailed variables and context-related factors (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As well as this, it assumes that people are different from physical phenomena because it is more difficult and complex to explore humans in the same way as physical phenomena (Saunders, et al., 2019).

3.6.3 Axiology

The third and final philosophy is axiology. With this aspect, the study is surrounded around judgements about values. This theory is also known as "the theory of value". This theory is concerned directly with the term "value" and lays the foundations for the considerable expansion that has been associated with said term (Britannica, 2015). With this, it ensures there is a unification for a number of questions around the topics of economic, moral, aesthetic and logical (Britannica, 2015).

When looking at this particular study, the author has decided on the paradigm of interpretivism as this particular approach has a strong focus on things like interactions with people as well as the communication with other people can cause the individual to change their behaviour (Pham,

2019). Given the nature of this study around the opinion of those working within the industry, it is quite a subjective topic with changes in culture. The data collected for this study, in turn, will be subjective given the nature of the research, meaning a more subjective-style approach is needed for this philosophy.

3.7 Research Approach

According to Saunders et al (2019), one of the main aims of performing research is to not only examine the current theories, but to create new theories and add to the area of study. As a researcher, it is vital to understand the research approach as it allows the researcher to focus and gain extensive knowledge into the research problem and decide how best to solve the problem.

When developing and creating a theory, there are two primary theoretical approaches that are commonly considered and these are inductive and deductive reasoning. There is not one preferred theory to use to conduct a research study, however, some are more suited than others (Niglas, 2010). When speaking about the approach, in general, it depends a lot on the questions that will be put in the researcher's study (Marczyk, et al., 2015).

With the above considered thoroughly by the researcher, it was felt the best way to approach this research was inductive reasoning. This approach was chosen as the evidence is there for it to be the most appropriate approach, that is, inductive reasoning is a loose structure by nature and will facilitate any possible unforeseen outcomes as well as allowing probing within this process that help investigate into the researcher's topic in more detail. Given the nature of the research topic in question, an approach that is exploratory is needed and inductive reasoning best suits this.

3.8 Research Method

At the base level, research methods are the different strategies, processes and even techniques adopted by the researcher in data collection and the evidence that is analysed with the hope of discovering new information or understanding an area of discussion more concisely (Court & Molesworth, 2003). There are a number of different approaches a researcher can adopt to best investigate their chosen area of research. These are quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method approach (David, et al., 2018). While these are three different approaches, Creswell & Creswell (2018) make the argument that these approaches should not be viewed as "rigid" and "opposites" but merely just represent two different ends of the "continuum". (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When choosing the most appropriate method, it is of the highest importance

the author of the study must consider the intent of the study, the questions that are going to directly deal with the research and the goals of the research.

Upon extensive research of the work of Creswell & Creswell (2018), the researcher opted for a qualitative research approach. The reason for this is due to the opinion of the researcher that the data received in a quantitative approach would only result in a lack of depth and unquantifiable data. This differs to qualitative as this approach is used for understanding the meaning that certain groups or individuals associate to a problem, whether that be a human or social one (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In addition to the qualitative approach, the monomethod design was adopted by the researcher. With this design, it facilitates the needs of this research, that is, in-depth interviews with people who work in the pub industry. The topics in questions are opinions on pub culture, the influence media has on the perception of pub culture, the effect off-sales have on the pub industry and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the industry.

3.9 Research Strategy

In this section, the researcher looks at the next layer of the onion. This section is about choosing the correct research strategies for the area of study. The author felt that a grounded theory approach was the best for this study. With grounded theory, it uses an inductive approach in order to take correlations from the data the researcher gathers and analyses. In association with this, the research strategy is also concerned with choosing the best analysis process. After considering numerous different analysis methods and processes, the researcher settled on Spiggle's (1994) framework for the fundamental activities of inference for qualitative researchers. In this framework, there are seven distinct operations. These are categorisation, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalisation, integration, iteration and refutation. In a more simplistic way, the researcher aims to categorise the collected data into codes, reduce the initial codes and group these codes in conjunction with the themes portrayed by the interviewed parties. This coincides with Spiggle (1994) as she claims The analysis *"breaks down complex whole into its constituent parts. Through analytical operations researchers dissect, reduce, sort and reconstitute data"*.

3.10 Time Horizons

The next layer of Saunders et al (2007) research onion in question is the time horizon layer. In this layer, there is two choices that must be made. Will the research take place over the cross-sectional period or the longitudinal period. Cross-sectional relies on the data to be collected on a certain period of time and not over multiple different timeframes. Longitudinal takes place

over an extended period and is a continuous data collection method (Saunders, et al., 2012). With time restrictions being a key factor in this dissertation, a cross-sectional approach was chosen by the researcher. With this approach, it allows the researcher to gather the current opinions and views from their interviewees. While the researcher concedes that a longitudinal approach would yield a more detailed and in-depth set of results, the time constraints of the study made it impractical.

3.11 Data Collection

The last and most central layer of the onion is the data collection section (Saunders, et al., 2007). In the author's data collection, it was important to set boundaries in terms of sampling and recruitment, collecting the information through either structured, unstructured or semi-constructed observations. It is also important for the researcher to establish a clear protocol and method for conducting the interviews with the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In terms of this study, implementing a semi-structured interview style was deemed appropriate to gather the best results from the interviewees. With qualitative studies, it is usually deemed the "norm" when participants are hand-selected to take part in the study. Generally, a researcher will select certain individuals to take part in the study in order to get the best and most meaningful results to answer the research questions and objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Random sampling and selecting a large quantity of participants is usually associated with quantitative studies. For this study, however, quality is desired over quantity in terms of the participants.

For the selection criteria of this study, the researcher deemed it necessary to interview people who have worked in the pub/alcohol industry for a minimum of 20 years. The reason for this is it will allow to researcher to draw a more accurate conclusion from the results as the research in question examines the pub culture over the last three decades (30 years). As well as this, requirement of working in the industry for at least 20 years, a requirement of working in the sector in Ireland was also essential as the study is based on the Irish pub culture exclusively and not that of different regions in the world.

The researcher conducted a total of three in depth interviews with individuals surrounding the industry. The interviews were conducted in a way to facilitate expansion and expression on the questions being asked. The questions were structured so that they were open-ended in order to promote the interviewee to expand in detail on the topics being asked. These interviews were conducted face-to-face, as permitted by current Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the interviews. The use of the recording device was implemented on an iPhone with the audio then

being stored on a singular USB device to avoid any breach in GDPR and privacy. After this, the author deployed the use of Otter to transcribe these interviews. Prior to the final interviews, the researcher used a pilot interview to insure that the equipment and methods were working as they should. Lastly, tools like WhatsApp, email and Google Forms were used in order to create consent forms for participants.

3.12 Consideration of Ethics

Ethical concerns are an area of all research studies that must be taken into account by the author. The interviewees were contacted and given the details of the interview. Along with this, the researcher outlined the background of the study and the purpose of the study. As well as that, the researcher supplied a detailed purpose of the interviews and made it clear to the participants that their willingness to partake in the study is completely voluntary and they were afforded the opportunity to ask any questions and raise any concerns they had on their participation in the study. Anonymity is also something some people may require. Due to this, it was made apparent that this could be arranged should the interviewees wish to remain anonymous. The participants were required to sign a consent form prior to any interviews taking place. The researcher also made it clear that any data collected would be completely confidential and would be made available to the respondents after the analysis. Lastly, the researcher informed the participants that they could withdraw from the research at any stage should they wish to do so prior to submission of the dissertation.

Chapter 4: Secondary Data Report

4.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this study, ultimately, is to investigate the possible change in Ireland's pub culture as well as understanding what are the key drivers of this change, from the people within the industry's viewpoint. With the primary data gathered through a qualitative research approach, the researcher will be able to compare the data received to previously published secondary data.

As of now, there is currently a very minimal amount of qualitative data gathered from the people working in the pub industry. The aim of this chapter is to gather all relevant secondary quantitative data on the industry with things like tax margins, consumption rates, prices, margins and government regulations on alcohol and to examine if there can be a correlation made between both the primary qualitative data and the secondary quantitative data.

4.2 Evaluating the current "scene"

Dublin is home to over 1.2 million, the largest of all counties in Ireland, residents and is the capital of Ireland (CSO, 2017). Dublin is a place that the demand for pubs is growing, up until at least 2018, and according to Morrissey & McCarthy (2018), the reason for this due to them having a constant flow of people throughout the day, offer "pub grub" and usually benefit from the local offices nearby, have large populations and good access to the pubs such as public transport. This is said to be the case for well developed areas in urban, suburban and mid-town areas.

In terms of the pricing of alcohol in the pubs in Dublin, they typically have higher prices than that of rural pubs in the country. The reason for this is due to added expenses and amenities such as rent (Morrissey & McCarthy, 2018). Below, a list of average prices and their variance has been compiled in a study done by Byrne (2020) represented in Figure 5.

Type of Drink (in Pints, Unless Otherwise Stated)	Average Price (€). Will vary by about €0.50 across most of Dublin
Guinness	€5.50
Lager	€5.90
Cider	€6.00
Craft Beer/ Cider	€6.30
Glass of Wine	€6.00
Measure of Sprit (Liquor)	€5.50 (This will vary a lot)
Measure Spirit + Mixer	€7.50 (This will vary a lot)

Figure 5 - Average drink prices in Dublin (Byrne, 2020).

While the prices in figure 3 are high, especially in comparison to that of the rural and countryside pubs, these prices are anticipated to increase again due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, according Brent (2020). This is of extreme importance as the pubs operating in Dublin need to make a turnover of around €12,000 - €13,000 just to stay in business (Morrissey & McCarthy, 2018). It is also important to note that the pubs in the Dublin region typically have a greater margin on things over that of pubs in rural areas. This can be seen below in an illustration by Morrissey & McCarthy (2018) in Figure 6.
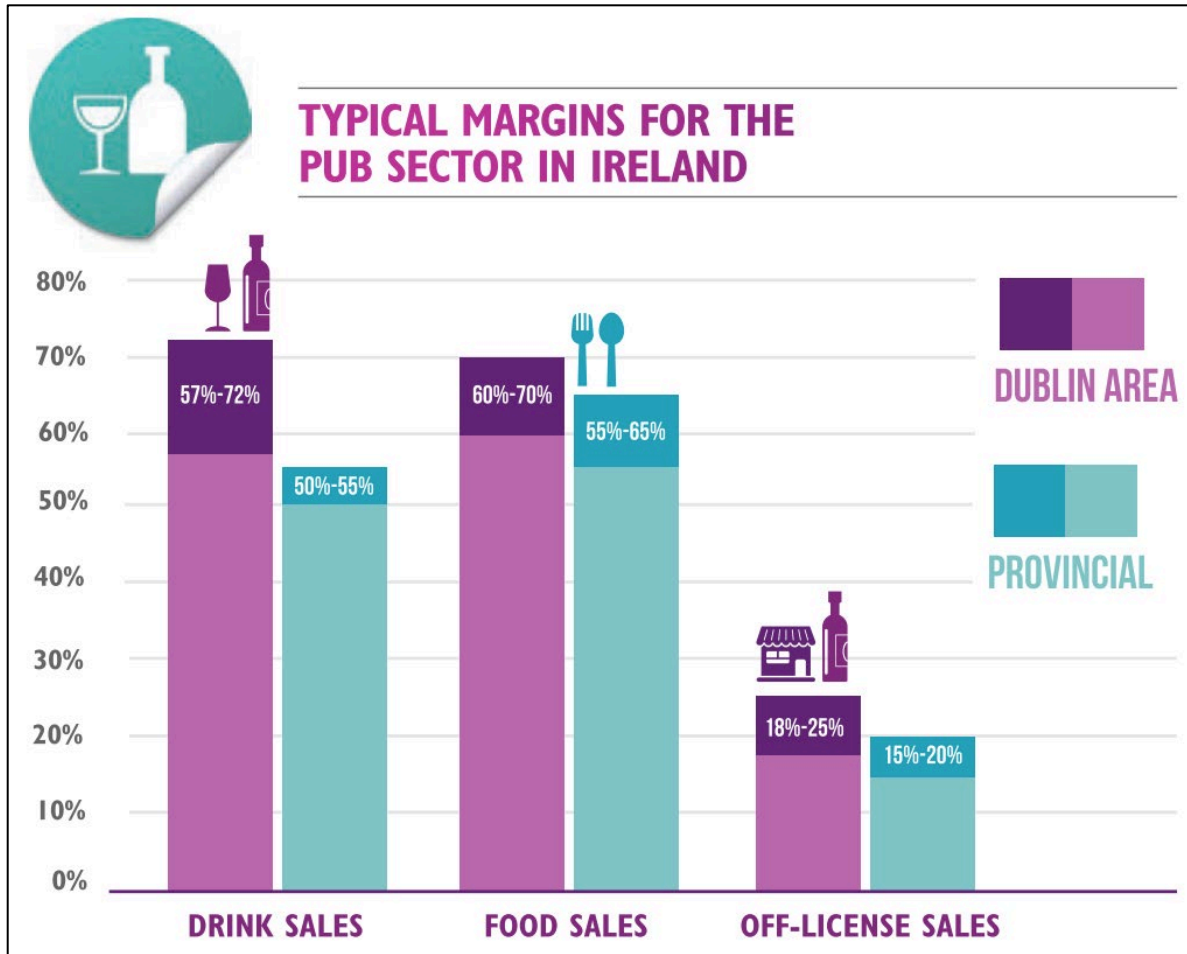
Figure 6 - Margins on alcohol for pub industry in Ireland (Morrissey & McCarthy, 2018)

4.2.1 Tax on alcohol

In Ireland, there is a typically high level of tax on alcohol products. This is in comparison to other EU countries, meaning Ireland's excise duties are significantly higher than that of their neighbours (Foley, 2020). The result of this is that the price to purchase alcohol in Ireland is higher than it is in many of the EU member countries. The VAT in Ireland increases as the prices of alcohol rise. This compared to EU ranks as the highest in the EU for alcohol and third highest for all consumable goods. This is known as the PLI or Price Level Index (CSO, 2020). This is highlighted in the below in figure 7.
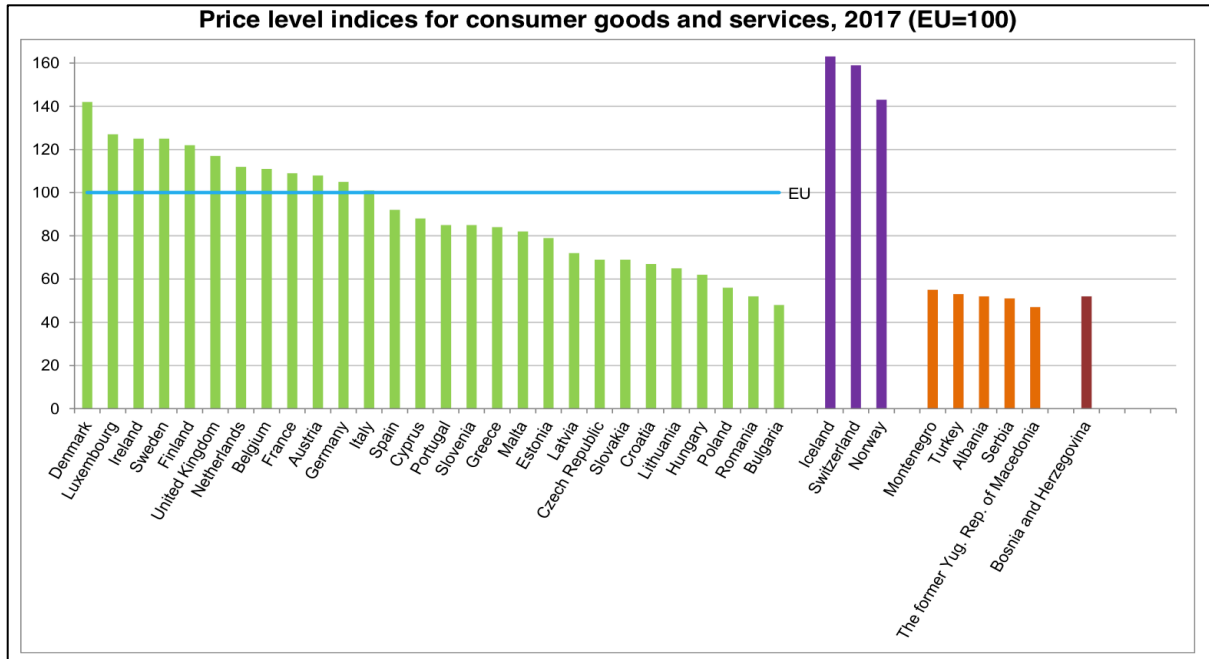
Figure 7 - Consumer PLI in EU (CSO, 2017)

The problem with this graph, however, is that due to the current pandemic, the publics spending on alcohol, specifically pubs, has declined dramatically. This decline will not be fixed instantly and will take a recovery period according to McGeown (2020). This is projected in the below figure 8.
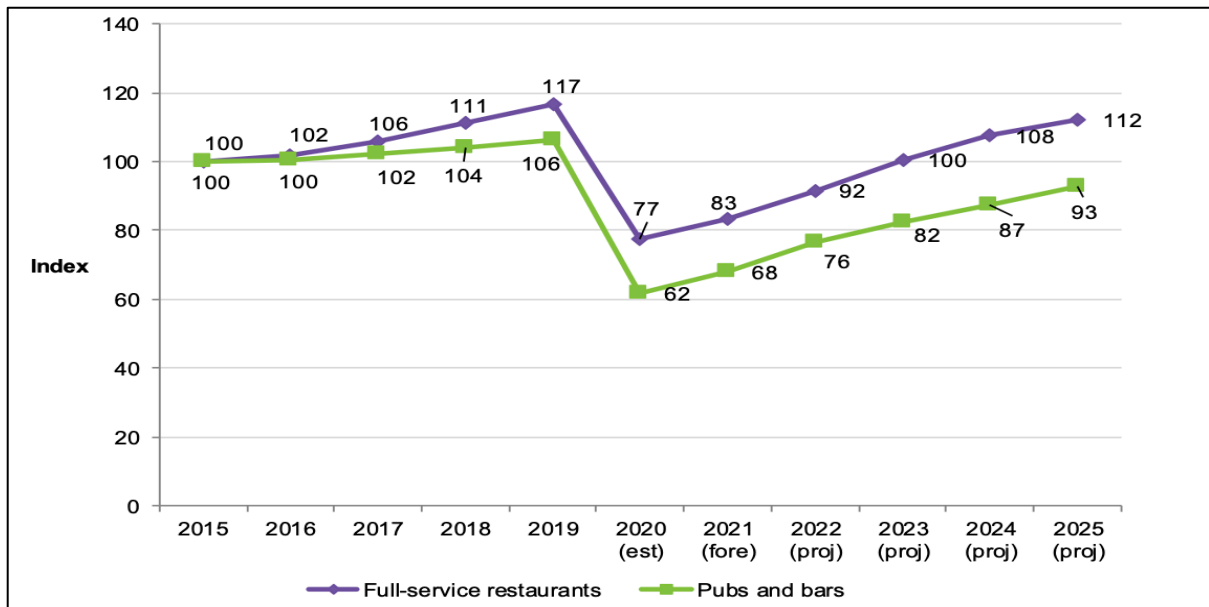
Figure 8 - Indexed consumer spending 2015-2025 (McGeown, 2020)

Given the nature of alcohol, it is a fair assumption to make that the amount people will consume and the frequency they will visit pubs in Ireland depends a lot on their disposable income. Due to this, depending on how affordable alcohol is will directly affect the growth level of the consumption of alcohol, particularly in Ireland (Alcohol Ireland, 2019). While this is said to

40

be true, the current levels of alcohol consumption is high across Ireland even though the rates of tax and the overall cost of alcohol is equally high, especially when compared to the other prices in Europe (Foley, 2020). Below is a table, represented by Figure 9 captured from Revenue Ireland (2021) documenting the current excise duties in Ireland on alcohol.

Alcohol Products Tax

The below table contains the rates of Alcohol Products Tax for the various types of beverages that are excisable.

Alcohol Products Tax rates for spirits, beer and wine

Product	Description or usage	Rate of duty
Spirits		€42.57 per litre of alcohol in the spirits
Beer	Exceeding 0.5% volume but not exceeding 1.2% volume	€0.00
	Exceeding 1.2% volume but not exceeding 2.8% volume	€11.27 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
	Exceeding 2.8% volume	€22.55 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer
Wine	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% volume	€141.57 per hectolitre
	Still, exceeding 5.5% volume but not exceeding 15% volume	€424.84 per hectolitre
	Still, exceeding 15% volume	€616.45 per hectolitre
	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% volume	€849.68 per hectolitre

Alcohol Products Tax rates for other fermented and intermediate beverages

Product	Description or usage	Rate of duty
Other fermented beverages: (1) Cider and perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 2.8% volume	€47.23 per hectolitre
	Still and sparkling, exceeding 2.8% volume but not exceeding 6% volume	€94.46 per hectolitre
	Still and sparkling, exceeding 6.0% volume but not exceeding 8.5% volume	€218.44 per hectolitre
	Still, exceeding 8.5% volume	€309.84 per hectolitre
	Sparkling, exceeding 8.5% volume	€619.70 per hectolitre
Other fermented beverages: (2) Other than cider and perry	Still and sparkling, not exceeding 5.5% volume	€141.57 per hectolitre
	Still, exceeding 5.5% volume	€424.84 per hectolitre
	Sparkling, exceeding 5.5% volume	€849.68 per hectolitre
Intermediate beverages	Still, not exceeding 15% volume	€424.84 per hectolitre
	Still, exceeding 15% volume	€616.45 per hectolitre
	Sparkling	€849.68 per hectolitre

Figure 9 - Tax rates of alcohol in Ireland (Revenue Ireland, 2021)

Context can be given for the figures above when we compare some of the levies to that of Europe. Ireland has the highest tax on wine, second highest on beer and third highest spirits when compared to the rest of the EU countries (Foley, 2020). This evidently has an effect on Ireland's ability to be competitive in this industry when trying to attract tourism to the region for alcohol consumption.

4.2.2 Regulation on alcohol

Just like all countries, there are certain rules and regulations in place for establishments that sell and serve alcohol. However, every country has different rules and variations on these regulations. These regulations are policed and enforced by the Gardaí Síochanna (police) in

Ireland. As per Citizens Information (2021), the legal age to consume and to be sold alcohol in Ireland is 18 years of age. As well as this, only the licensed premises can serve and sell alcohol products and the hours of operation vary, depending on days (Citizens Information, 2021). A list of these times of operation can be observed below:

- For pubs:
  - Monday – Thursday = 10:30am to 11:30pm
  - Friday & Saturday = 10:30am to 12:30am
  - Sunday = 12:30pm to 11:00pm
- Off-Licenses:
  - Monday – Saturday = 10:30am to 10:00pm
  - Sunday = 12:30 to 10:00pm

In addition to this, there are certain restrictions in place for things like "happy hour" as it is illegal to reduce the price of alcohol at certain times whereas in years prior to this law, pubs and bars could do this freely (Citizens Information, 2021). These laws and regulations are constantly being updated and changed. Loyalty card programs, short term price promotions and alcoholic items being sold at reduced prices when both with another item are all now banned (Citizens Information, 2021).

These sort restrictions are monitored closely and if a pub is found to be in breach of any of these regulations, they can face severe legal action and their license can be revoked without warning.

4.2.3 Consumption

The consumption rate of alcohol refers to how many units of alcohol are consumed and how often. According to Calvo-Porral & Levy-Mangin (2019), it is affected by both physical and social factors. These can be why, where, when, how long and with what company the person consuming the alcohol is with at the time. When we look at Ireland, in 2018 20% of Irish adults (18+ years of age) did not consume alcohol (Alcohol Ireland, 2019). However, Alcohol Ireland (2019) went on to state that the current statistics show that 11 litres of pure alcohol were consumed per capita in Ireland. In conjunction with this, an estimated trend for alcohol consumption across the world, including Ireland, was release by WHO (2020) for 2020-2025 showcasing a rise in alcohol levels across the world. This can be observed below in Figure 10.

Indicator	Alcohol, total (recorded + unrecorded) per capita (15+) consumption with 95%CI, projections to 2020 and 2025	
Location	2025	2020
Germany	12.6 [11-14.1]	12.8 [11.6-14]
Ireland	13.9 [10.8-17]	13.5 [11.3-15.6]
Spain	8.9 [5.3-12.4]	9.6 [7.2-11.9]
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	11.8 [10.2-13.3]	11.5 [10.5-12.5]
United States of America	10.3 [9.2-11.3]	10.1 [9.4-10.8]

Figure 10 - Alcohol, total (recorded + unrecorded) per capita (15+) consumption projections to 2020 and 2025 (WHO, 2020)

In terms of what actual alcohol is being consumed by the Irish people varies as expected. Beer was the most consumed alcoholic beverage as of 2019 with 45% of alcohol consumed belonging to beer drinkers. The least amount of consumed alcohol belonged to cider with only 7% of alcohol in Ireland (Statista, 2019). This can be further examined with the table adapted from Statista (2020) below in Figure 11.
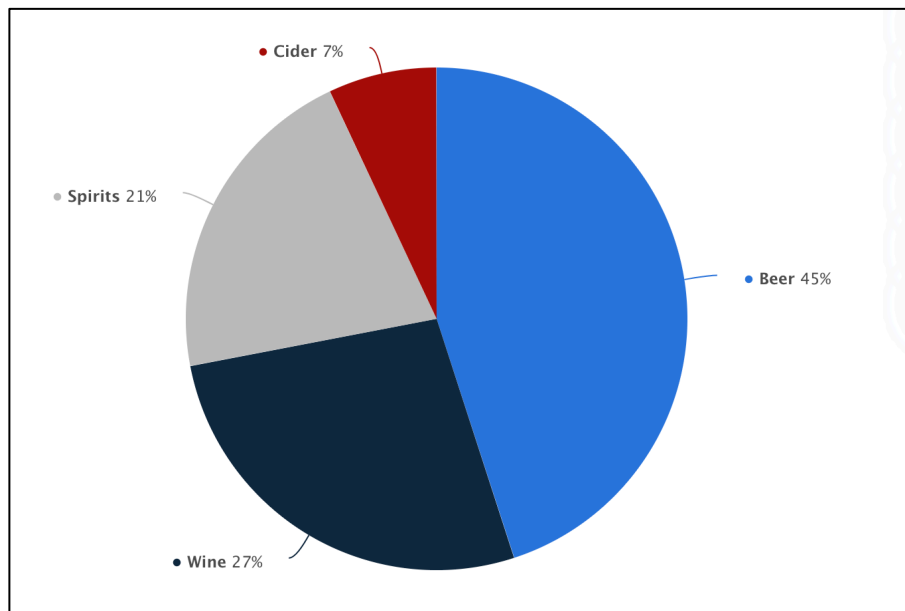

Figure 11 - Distribution of Alcohol consumed in Ireland (Statista, 2019)

Chapter 5: Findings & Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author puts forward the data received from the interviews as well as an in-depth analysis. In order to help with analysing this data, a thematic analysis approach was used. The aim of this approach is to break the data up into different sets. With this, themes were created by observing the data through the interviews and condensing the open coded data by drawing correlations between the different interviews. With this, axial codes are identified and resulted in categories being created with these codes. These acted as the themes that will be discussed throughout this chapter. Once the researcher deemed a category relevant, it was merged based on the theoretical similarities or even contradictions in order to form the superordinate themes. A table below can be observed to see the themes outlined in Figure 12. For the purpose of this study, the researcher felt it was best practice to combine the results and discussion chapters in order to give a more free flowing and understandable analysis for the reader.

Emergent Themes for the Data Analysis		
	Superordinate Themes	**Subordinate Themes**
Theme One	Pub Culture	Publican's perception Media's interpretation
Theme Two	Alcohol Availability	Supermarkets and creating new habits
Theme Three	Impact of Covid-19	Changing operations

Figure 12 - Emergent themes in data analysis

5.1.1 Participant's Background

For this study, the author chose to interview three publicans in the industry. The three publicans chosen each come from a different area of Dublin with a wealth of experience in the pub industry.

The first participant was Denis. Having worked in the industry for over 36 years in various different pubs, he now owns, runs and operates his own pub for the last 30 years. His pub is located in the Dublin 1 area and has been a landmark of the area.

The second of the interviewees is John. John has worked in the industry for over 31 years, owning his fair share of pubs in that time. John owns a number of pubs in both the Dublin 1 and Dublin 2 areas, some of which are tourist oriented.

Thirdly, the researcher interviewed Alan. Living outside of the city centre, Alan owns one of the busiest pubs in the Dublin 3 area. The pub has been in his family for three previous generations. Alan has been running and operating the pub for the past 15 years, but has been working in the industry for over 25 years.

In chapter 2, the literature review, many of the subjects addressed were found in the data obtained here. The data obtained from the interviews highlighted the themes around the pub culture of Ireland, the availability of alcohol and the implications Covid-19 has had on the industry. The themes are separated into two different categories. Superordinate themes are deemed more important and prominent while the subordinate themes are of a lower ranking of the subsidiary ideas. The main superordinate themes presented these subordinate themes within them. With this, these conform with a lot of the literature reviewed earlier.

5.2 Attributes to making the Irish Pub Culture

There are many things that contribute to creating a culture as discussed previously. The factors that contribute to a drinking culture can differ from country to country or even region to region. One of the main objectives of this study is to examine the change in pub culture in Ireland. With that, discovering what makes a culture goes hand-in-hand as a basis for deciding what has changed the pub culture. The first superordinate theme in question was the pub culture. This theme arose time and time again throughout the interviews. The participants made remarks on what they felt were the attributes to what makes the Irish pub culture what it is. They also displayed a particular theoretical view on culture creation, specifically interactionalist's views.

> *"So, I suppose for me, the traditional Irish pub culture was being able to go down to the pub with your mates, relax and have good craic with everyone. To answer the question, I suppose the thing for me that makes the Irish pub culture is the atmosphere amongst everyone in the pub and the general feeling of craic."*
>
> *Denis*

As Das (1988) highlights, interactional theorists is based on the way the people of the society interact with each other. The culture is also created and maintained by the actions of the people amongst society. Above, the interviewee makes note to the "atmosphere amongst everyone" and "going down to the pub with your mates… have good craic with everyone" this displays a clear interactionalist theoretical approach when it comes to pub culture. The participants view conforms with the theoretical view of an interactionalist the most instead of the functionalist or conflict based theories. In addition to this, Sargent (1968) makes note to eight general orientations when it comes to what creates a drinking culture. One of these is drinking as a symbol of mate ship. As the participant refers to going to the pub with their "mates" as a contributor to the culture in the pub. While the data obtained by Sargent (1968) could be dismissed due to the large time that has elapsed since the study was conducted, it is clear that the information obtained with the study is still relevant today as the researcher has found a clear correlation with the data.

To add to this, the view on the Irish pub culture has been contributed to a lot to do with the togetherness of the people and the accepting nature of all people in the country. This does not conform to Gmel, et al (2007) when they claim that when countries refer to a drinking culture, it is usually attributed to the men of that society.

> *"I believe the Irish drinking culture is created from a core togetherness of the country. We all go out together with our partners, wife, husband, whatever and go down to our local and enjoy each other's company. I feel like our culture involves everyone with open arms and doesn't judge. We love seeing new faces and welcome anybody into our pub."*
>
> ***John***

The idea of the men of society being the evidence of a country's pub culture is held with a strong view as the men usually drink most frequently in most societies (Gmel, et al., 2007). This, however, is refuted by the interviewee's opinion that culture is created from the "togetherness of the country" and makes note that going out with "partners, wife, husband, whatever" is what we typically do and it involves everyone. This view has presented a new narrative and viewpoint to what creates the Irish pub culture as no studies the researcher has found made note to this being a contributor to the Irish pub culture. Viewing culture has many

different groupings and viewpoints. For example, when speaking about culture, the person could be speaking about culture in a town in a city or they could be speaking about the culture of a county within a country. This can also be extended to a broader understanding and interpretation of culture if one looks at western society as a whole culture and the eastern side in a different viewpoint (Griswold, 1992). As such, for the context of John's information, it is fair to look at his approach to Irish pub culture in the view of a country's culture.

5.2.1 The publican perception of the pub & bar culture

The first of the subordinate themes displayed in the researcher's study was the perception the public house owners have on the current Irish pub culture. A key component to this study is to gain the understanding of the industry's culture from the people working in the industry, specifically the owners. As the literature has previously uncovered, there are a number of different factors that contribute to a country's culture, whether that be a pub, drinking or sociological culture (Michalopoulos, et al., 2016). An area that has emerged during the interviews is the opinion the publicans have on the pub culture currently. The pubs of Ireland are important for not only the economic reasons for jobs and tax generation, they are also important for the people's avenue of stress relief and other social acceptance reasons (Cabras & Mount, 2017). The pubs of Ireland allow people to build relationships with other people as well as form a social purpose with other likeminded people of the society (Cabras & Mount, 2016).

> *"the pubs culture now is so different to when I was growing up. When we went to the pub it was all about switching off away from other stuff. Especially the likes of family, wife, kids etc. Now there's more kids in pubs on a Sunday than there is adults."*
>
> **Alan**
>
> *"For me, Ireland's culture is slowly dying, especially what I am used to. There is a severe lack of traditional pubs and most of the ones left are robbery for a pint."*
>
> **Denis**

In both extractions from the interviews conducted, there is a level of similarity in what both interviewees are saying. Their previous understanding and experience with Ireland's pub culture is changing. As Savic, et al (2016) makes note to, a country's culture can change as different generations are exposed to different elements and scenarios within their own lifetime. With this in mind, it is a fair assumption that this would be the case when seeking a generational

understanding of pub culture in Ireland. Looking at the current state of the Irish pub culture, we can see there is a clear change. Denis uses the term "traditional" in relation to the pubs they are used to. He also makes note of the culture "dying" as they're not what they used to be. This conforms with the view from other studies that culture can change easily when other generations experience their own culture (Savic, et al., 2016). Furthermore, when asked about the pub culture changing from when he began in the industry to now, Denis gave a clear indication that he believes the pub culture has changed "without question" and he also says "bars nowadays are so different." There seems to be a strong belief amongst the publican community that the pub culture has changed over the years.

5.2.2 Media portrayal of pub culture

The second subordinate theme the researcher discovered was the media's portrayal of the Irish pub culture. As the previous research has indicated, the general viewing of the Irish pub and drinking culture by the media is viewed in a negative light. As Hogan (2020) claimed, the Irish drinking culture has often been questioned by onlookers and people from outside the culture. Along with this claim, Ireland has always been a nation that is well known and understood for their drinking and alcohol consumption (Your Irish, 2019). The researcher set out to discover if the media's portrayal had an effect on the perception on Irish pub culture from the opinion of the publicans. Of the three interviews conducted, the three answers received differed in their own way, creating an unclear view.

"if you mean newspapers and stuff like that then I think they are less relevant now."

Denis

"media outlets have helped drive my business forward to be honest. My business is heavily dependent on the tourist industry so the more media coverage the better."

John

"they do display a bad image for us Irish don't they? But look, in my view, there is no such thing as bad publicity so write negatively about the Irish and drinking, it only puts us on the map for a guaranteed good time!"

Alan

As seen above, there is a clear contrast amongst the three publicans in their opinions. While many of the outlets have referred to Ireland's culture as being over-dependent on alcohol (Ganatra, 2019) and even a tragic comedy (Ball, 2017), Denis makes the point that their opinion does not matter anymore, especially for the younger generation. According to Denis "media outlets aren't as powerful as they once were" and he goes on to make note that the younger generation "don't read the newspapers". Interestingly, he believes the people these days are more concerned with global issues such as "humans rights, racism, all that kind of stuff."

The outlook from Denis differs drastically to that of the interview of John. While the data in the literature review suggests there is a negative view created by the media outlets, he claims they have helped "drive my business forward." Even though the Irish drinking culture is deemed an embarrassment from certain writers and media outlets (Collins, 2015), John claims it "brings new bums on my seats" with all the tourist hype around Ireland and drinking.

The previous two interviews have seemingly gone against the media's bad portrayal of the Irish drinking culture. Alan has agreed it is a "bad image for us Irish" but it does have its benefits. Alan makes the claim that there is no such thing as bad media coverage and it only "puts us on the map more". While Ganatra (2019) may be correct that there is an over-dependence on the Irish drinking culture, as Alan agrees there is a bad image displayed by the media, he essentially feels it's still good publicity.

5.3 The availability of alcohol

The second of the superordinate themes that the researcher discovered is the availability of alcohol. As it was previously established, the availability of alcohol has increased drastically as the years have progressed and it continues to increase year by year (Bowers, 2020). The impact this has had on the pub culture is yet to be explored by the current literature. With the conduction of the interviews, the author has identified a common view from the interviewees on the impact and effect the selling of alcohol off-premises has had on the industry. By increasing the availability of a product or service, it leads to an accelerated change in people's consumption of said product and/or services as the consumer's decision making process must account for more decisions (Allison & Uhl, 1964). With the case of alcohol availability, previously there was only one place to purchase and consume alcohol, a pub. Now, however the availability has led to 70% of the alcohol consumed in the U.K accredited to take home alcohol as of 2014 (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2014).

> *"Years ago, drinking at home was not really a thing. We all went out for our drinks and pints."*
>
> **Denis**

> **"***Every corner shop, garage and newsagent is selling drink now***"*
>
> **Denis**

Firstly, Denis makes a remark towards how "years ago" people did not tend to drink at home, this presents an opinion from Denis that the way in which people drank their alcohol previously has changed to now. As well as this, he makes a remark in terms of the availability of alcohol by saying "Now, you go into the supermarket for a loaf of bread and you come out with a case of beer." This statement can be linked to a person's purchase decision behaviour since the interviewee makes note to a person going into a shop for one thing but decides to make an additional impulse purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). When looking into the cultural aspect the increased availability of alcohol has had on the pub culture in Ireland. Denis makes note to people now becoming "more comfortable" drinking from home and they are now more focused on "the cost of drinking and not the experience", drawing another correlation with the narrative that the cultural aspect of drinking alcohol in a pub has changed. As the data has suggested, there is an increased consumption of alcohol at home now and Denis evidently believes there is an influx of places selling alcohol as he makes note to many shops now selling alcohol.

> *"it's certainly impacted the pubs around the country, particularly the pub game in the city centre. A culture of going out to get drunk doesn't exist amongst young lads. People go out drunk to save money."*
>
> **John**

In supporting the claim that the increased availability of alcohol has had an effect on the pub culture in Ireland, John makes note to people's reasoning and desire from drinking alcohol. As Denis had mentioned earlier, he believes people are becoming more cost concerned when it comes to consuming alcohol. This enables the researcher to identify the link between John and Denis. John refers to people going out drunk in order to save money, while Denis says people are more concerned with the cost of drink these days. While Abbey et al (1993) makes note that one of the reasons people consume alcohol is due to their social settings and norms of the people around them, John's belief is that this "norm" is changing and has changed previously from past generations of people consuming alcohol.

5.3.1 Influence of the supermarkets

In the second of the superordinate themes, a subordinate them was identified around the influence the supermarkets have had on the pub industry in Ireland. It has been well documented that the supermarkets in Ireland have been able to sell alcohol at a largely reduced price, often lower than the cost of production (Lynott, 2020). While the aim of the supermarkets is not always to make profit on the selling of their alcohol, they aim to entice people in with their cheap alcohol prices in the hopes of people impulse buying other items when they go in (Donnelly, 2014). As well as this, publicans must fork out large sums of money for licenses, registrations, and fees (Abacus Legal, 2021). Supermarkets can avoid these fees and reduce their costs even further by buying in bulk.

> *"Absolutely no pub in the world can compete with those ludicrous prices they charge. The fact they sell their stuff for more than half of what I buy my stock for is mental."*
>
> ***Alan***

> *"Supermarkets are the biggest killers to us publicans."*
>
> ***Denis***

Alan makes note to the level of competition he feels the pub industry has with the supermarkets. According to Alan, it is hard to compete with their "ludicrous" pricing they offer. This point and severity of the competition from the supermarkets on the pub industry is further highlighted as Denis says they are the "biggest killers" to the publicans of the industry. Denis continues in his interview by mentioning the difficulty to compete with their prices as "its costs me €30-€35 for a case of 24 Heineken… Tesco had a case of Heineken for €13." This backs up Alan's point of pricing being the hardest area of competition for publicans. As it was mentioned in the literature review, there has been an increase of 40% by people purchasing alcohol in supermarkets alone in Ireland (Bowers, 2020).

> *"People are happy to go and get their drink cheaply in the supermarket, sit at home with their friends and not fork out the money for taxis, expensive drink and that."*
>
> ***John***

Adding to this, John mentions people's happiness to not go out, but to rather stay at home now as its cheaper. This again gives context to the level of competition and impact the selling of cheap alcohol in the supermarkets has on the pub industry, particularly in Ireland.

5.4 Impact of Covid-19 on the pub industry

The last of the superordinate themes displayed in the interview's is the impact Covid-19 has had on the pub industry in Ireland. Like all industries across the country's economy, the hospitality industry has been hit drastically. The literature review looked at the various aspects within the pub industry that have been effected from the Covid-19 pandemic, including pub closures (Carruthers, 2020). A lot of the pubs and restaurants that were forced to close have felt that they will not be able to open their doors for business again, which will result in a severe amount of job losses for the country (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020). In terms of the impact this will have on the people interviewed, there is a clear vision that the industry as a whole will be impacted greatly.

> *"But even as I mentioned earlier, people are building bars in their own houses now. That is going to completely accelerate the change in our pub culture."*
>
> **Denis**

Quite notably and importantly, Denis makes a clear point that the Covid-19 pandemic will accelerate the change in the Irish pub culture. This is universal viewpoint around Covid that while it has been damaging for the economy globally, it has still accelerated a lot of change in many industries, such as online shopping (McKinsey & Company, 2020). As Drinks Industry Group of Ireland (2020) make note to that 80% of employers who have cut their staff it is due to the "reduced demand" in the pub industry. A reduced demand can signify a change in the pub culture as mentioned by Denis above.

> *"Hugely impacted us all. But in my case, even though I was able to open, I was still making a loss because of the ridiculous restrictions with capacity."*
>
> **Alan**

Some business were suffering big losses due to being closed in heavy lockdown restrictions. When businesses began to open back up, a lot of the companies across the various industries were still making a loss (IBIS World, 2021). According to Alan, the restrictions implemented by the government on his industry caused him to be still make a loss, particularly due to the capacity allowed on the premises. This conforms to the report in the literature review that a number of the places who were permitted to open made a loss regardless (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020). Not only does the strict capacity restrictions make it harder for pubs

to remain profitable, it also means that the closure of the industry for so long will leave publicans with unsustainable and high costs of operations (IBIS World, 2021).

> *"Look there are pubs and areas that have been effected more than others when it comes to the pubs. The reality is though that the government have been helping us greatly. I know of pubs making just as much if not more now than they were before Covid."*
>
> **John**

There is, however, potential for conflicting opinions when it comes to the impact Covid-19 has had on the industry. While Drinks Industry Group of Ireland (2020) reports that 90% of publicans believe the government haven't been doing enough to support the industry, John has argued the government support received has been "great". On top of this, the report also claimed that many of the pubs are still reporting losses even when they are back open (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020). John's view conflicts with Alan's by saying some places are doing the same turnover if not more than they were prior to Covid-19.

5.4.1 Changing operations in the pub industry

Like the other superordinate themes, a subordinate theme has emerged around the main theme. The last of these is the different approaches publicans will face when it comes to their future operations of the business. Not only has Covid-19 accelerated change across all industries (McKinsey & Company, 2020), but it has also caused numerous industries to change their approach to their operations and become more diverse (Park, et al., 2021). the increase in people changing their method of purchasing and using services can be applied to the pub industry in Ireland too. Publicans agree that their future operations are likely to change.

> *"You cannot be a one-dimensional business, not anymore… So, for the future, I think we will see a lot more competition with pubs and there will more eye catching and maybe game changing tactics to the industry to constantly innovate will occur"*
>
> **Denis**

For the case of Denis, he believes that Covid-19 has meant business owners in the pub industry must begin to change their operations. Further down in his response, he anticipates that the rest of the industry will follow suit in order to be more competitive. With his own business, he makes note that "expanding the takeaway side of things" is one of his main priorities. As there is already a strong demand for take-home consumption of alcohol (Institute of Alcohol Studies,

2014), the potential to diversify into this area is "clear and sustainable" while not being too costly, according to Denis.

> *"More publicans will be changing. For me, I never did food. Now, I have a fire truck sitting in my carpark serving pizzas that everyone loves."*
>
> *Alan*

> *"I even built a brand-new outdoor smoking area to increase my capacity… without Covid that would never happen, no way."*
>
> *Alan*

When speaking about the change's pubs are going to make, Alan fits into this category of needing to adapt in order to stay operational. While before Covid-19 he not only did not do food but he "would have never dreamed of doing food." Now, however, he has changed and began serving food and claims that he wouldn't get rid of it as it helps people "stay longer and spend more."

Alan also expresses how Covid-19 forced him to make necessary investments in the infrastructure in order to increase his capacity during the government regulations which further confirms the view of McKinsey & Company (2020) that Covid has caused numerous businesses to accelerate any plans of deviation from their typical way of conducting business.

5.5 Conclusion

The main research question in this study focused around the pub culture and how it has changed. The data gathered through the interviews and that was analysed encompasses the opinions and views of those interviewed who work in the industry. In addition to the pub culture, areas such as the media's portrayal of pub culture, the off-sale selling of alcohol and the impact Covid-19 has had on the industry were all explored and questioned by the researcher. In the final chapter of this research, however, the researcher looks at the superordinate and subordinate themes created and gathers a conclusion, based on the research objectives previously set out prior to creating and conducting the interviews.

Chapter 6: Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of this study, the researcher will conclude the study by using the data analysed in the previous chapter. From the themes extracted in the data, both superordinate and subordinate themes, the researcher is able to relay this analysis in relation to the research objectives of the study as outlined in the earlier chapters. To finish, the chapter concludes with recommendations for any future research, managerial implications and the limitations faced by the researcher during the study.

6.2 Research Objective 1

To examine if the Irish pub culture has changed from the industry worker's point of view.

As one of the main areas of interest for this study, the researcher can conclude from the data gathered that there is indeed a change in the Irish drinking culture from the viewpoint of the publicans. A general consensus has been discovered that the parties interviewed are of the opinion that the culture has changed from when they first began working in the industry to now. One of the first aspects to note is the acknowledgement that Ireland has a distinct pub culture. In particular, the opinion of culture is closely matched to Das (1988) interactionalist theory, that is, the culture is developed through the interactions people have with other people and things in society. This matches up with the pub culture in Ireland, research has found. As well as this, the contributor to the culture of the pubs in Ireland has been put down to being able to enjoy a drink with friends and family, which is closely tied to Sargent (1963) view that the reason a lot of people drink is for a sense of "mate ship". There is, however, a confliction with the view of the men of the society are the people who contribute to the pub culture only (Gmel, et al., 2007). In the author's findings, it is quite the opposite. Both men and women contribute to the pub culture in Ireland.

6.3 Research Objective 2

To understand the impact the media's portrayal of Irish drinking culture has on the perception of the culture.

This research objective appeared as a subordinate theme in the author's study. While the preliminary research in the literature clearly pointed towards a negative view on the Irish

drinking and pub culture, it still leaves this research objective inconclusive. With Ganatra (2019) claiming Ireland has a clear over-dependence on alcohol in order to have a good time and Ball (2017) going as far to say the Irish drinking culture is a "tragic comedy", it is clear that the view from the media is spiteful. However, in terms of the effect this view has on the drinking culture from Ireland, it is not all bad. With one of the interviewee's deeming the opinions of newspapers irrelevant in the modern age, and the other two claiming that the more coverage the Irish pubs get, whether it's good or bad, is always good for business as it attracts and entices visitors to come and try it for themselves. In terms of the media's impact, it has on the perception of Irish pub culture, it can be concluded that as per the primary data collected, the media has no effect on the perception of the Irish pub culture, regardless of the media's negative portrayal of the culture.

6.4 Research Objective 3

To determine the relationship between the selling of alcohol off-sale and the change in drinking culture in Ireland.

In another subordinate theme identified in the interview's, the third research objective can be answered. With the data collected before the interviews took place, the evidence was clear that there was a large rise in the amount of people beginning to purchase drink outside of the pub. With an increase of 40% of people purchasing alcoholic beverages in supermarkets and off-licenses, it was suspected there would be some effect on the industry (Bowers, 2020). With this in mind, it is clear that from the data collected from the researcher, that the pubs have been affected by off-sale purchasing. A particular area of note was the impact that the availability of cheaply priced alcohol in supermarkets has had on the pub culture in Ireland. As the interviews have highlighted, with the prices of alcohol so cheap, the pubs are unable to compete with the extreme prices. This has led to more people becoming cost-oriented when choosing their alcohol, leading to a fall demand in the public houses. The amount of alcohol being purchased from outside of pubs continues to rise too. As of up to 2014, all total alcohol sales, 70% were contributed to the off-sale market. With people being happier to drink at home with a few friends and not in the busy, lively pubs, there is a conclusion that this is changing the pub culture in Ireland. With that in mind, it can be concluded there is an interdependent relationship between the selling of alcohol off-sale and the change in the drinking and pub culture in Ireland.

6.5 Research Objective 4

To inspect the impact Covid-19 has had on the alcohol industry in Ireland

The final research objective in this study is the impact Covid-19 has had on the alcohol industry in Ireland. With Covid-19 being such a new and unknown topic, it is difficult to know the full effects any industry will deal with, not just the alcohol industry. The research points out to the loss of profits and many of the pubs not being able to open back up (Drinks Industry Group of Ireland, 2020). Additionally, even the pubs that have opened back up are still operating at a loss. According to Carruthers (2020), Ireland's pub industry has suffered the most out of all of Europe due to the prolonged lockdown period. In terms of the impact to trading, the general conclusion from the research is that the post Covid era will lead to many changes to the public house sector. Many pubs built new outdoor areas, most of which are now permanent. According to those interviewed, this will be the case for a lot of pubs now to expand their outdoor seating areas. On top of that, one of the interviewees believe that Covid-19 will have motivated many of the publicans to innovate and to constantly welcome change and introduce new ideas in order to regain the demand for their pubs. Another of the participants believes that what we all thought and felt as "normal" we will not go back to, adding to the permanent damage Covid-19 has done across the entire industry.

6.6 Limitations to study

This study, like most studies, possessed several limitations. While many of these limitations is universal to others performing a postgraduate study on an area, there are some limitations to note.

Firstly, time was a prominent limitation for this study. Given the nature of the research question about investigating the pub culture in Ireland, a large-scale research would have been more adequate. This, however, was not possible given the time constraints of the academic year and the other commitments with other modules relevant to the course of study.

Another key area of limitation is evidently the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected business and people individually in a variety of different ways. For this study, the restrictions in place made it more difficult. The resources and experiences usually available to college students were more difficult to access and even if they were accessed, some did not have the same impact on learning and discovery as they may have had without Covid. With most of the pubs closed for 14 months, the researcher was seeking information no longer fresh in the mind of the participants actively working in the industry.

Following this, another limitation identified is the focus on the bar industry exclusively. This research focused on the opinion of pub owners which meant to exclusion of hotels, restaurants and other hospitality-based industries. This means it may limit the generalisation of the findings of this research.

Lastly, another limitation due to the choice of qualitative based is that all conclusions are based on the researcher's analysis of the results which in turn, may be subjective to interviewer bias as often the data is analysed by two separate researchers to avoid this bias, however, in this case, only one researcher was tasked with analysing this data.

However, with the limitations being said, the researcher conducted a thorough investigation on the research area in question and was able to answer the research objectives and questions accordingly.

6.7 Recommendations for Alternative studies

The completion of this study has led the researcher to propose some areas that deserve and require further investigation. With this study, it focused on a small sample size of 3 participants. With this as a strong base and starting point, there is potential for a quantitative based study in order to research a larger sample size while also allowing a future researcher to empirically test the findings of this study.

Another recommendation the researcher would suggest is a more accurate study could be conducted post Covid-19 as this would allow for a better understanding of the current pub industry once all services and industries are back open to full capacity and normal service resumes.

Lastly, another area that can be explored is to gather the opinions of other workers in the industry such as bar staff. This would allow a more detailed and complete investigation into the pub culture of Ireland.

6.8 Conclusion

This study begins to lay the foundations in understanding the Irish pub culture in the view of the people working in the industry. With so little research done around this topic, it gives a starting point for future researchers in both qualitative and quantitative approaches. While the research faced some limitations, the findings uncovered and presented by the researcher help contribute to the existing literature and provide a solid foundation into the factors that contribute to the Irish pub culture from the viewpoint of the publicans.

Overall, the researcher has found that there are several distinct aspects that contribute to Irish drinking culture. Also discovered is that the current Irish pub culture differs from what it once

was. The interviewees believe it has changed drastically and some feel it has changed for the worse. As well as this, a link has been uncovered between the availability of alcohol in places like supermarkets and the change in pub culture around the country. Lastly, the full impact of Covid-19 has yet to be understood, but this research has begun to understand the potential changes that will occur in the industry in the coming years after Covid-19.

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