The Pub Experience: A Qualitative Study of the Tangible and Intangible Aspects of Pub-goers’ Perceptions of Pubs

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the University of Leicester

by

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December 2015
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ABSTRACT

The public house is understood as an iconic British establishment, which has existed for hundreds of years (Jones et al. 2002). Despite its heritage and social and economic benefits, the public house is rarely studied as more than simply a service setting or an unremarked-upon backdrop to other research questions. The lack of a nuanced understanding of the pub is especially problematic at the current juncture, when the public house market is experiencing a steady decline (Helsey and Seely, 2015).

Firstly, the research sought to identify those elements of the pub central to shaping people’s experiences of the space. Secondly, the research sought to highlight recurrent themes within people’s experiences of pubs. Adopting an interpretivist stance, the research utilised semi-structured interviews with 18 pub customers. Respondents were sampled from six different Everards pubs, selected to capture a diversity of pub settings.

The first research objective discovered three key tangible features of the pub space for pub-goers: physical features, staff and clientele. The second research objective revealed authenticity, nostalgia and escape as central themes of the pub experience. The key tangible features of the pub anchor potential escape from everyday life through authenticity and historical nostalgia. Finally, a holistic model of atmosphere for the pub space is proposed. Atmosphere is contingent on the key tangibles of the pub space, which in turn are impacted upon by several intervening variables.

The thesis addresses a lack of research on the pub as a holistic space, by identifying recurrent tangible and intangible benefits of the pub experience, and exploring their interrelationships in offering a meaningful means of escape. The thesis thus aims to contribute to the marketing literature that has conceptualized escape, authenticity, nostalgia and atmosphere, and to offer empirically-grounded insight to the pub trade with regard to why people go to pubs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could not have been completed without the help of numerous people. Firstly I would like to thank the ERDF, IRSA and Everards Brewery for funding this research, as without this funding it could not have taken place.

I would like to specifically extend thanks to Simon Godson and Gareth Smith from Everards Brewery who showed constant interest and support in the research, including aiding the acquisition of research sites.

I would not have been able to complete this research without the help of my supervisors Prof. Steven Brown and Dr. Jennifer Smith Maguire, who were always on hand to provide guidance and support. So special thanks to them.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank all the licensees who allowed this research to use their pubs as research sites and all the respondents who enthusiastically took part in interviews.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the public house

In *The Moon Under Water*, George Orwell (1946) offers a romanticised depiction of the perfect pub, highlighting the fascination of the British public with the public house. While some of Orwell’s ideas may now be outdated, several still remain important aspects of the pub of today. Aspects Orwell (1946) mentions such as clientele who are present for ‘conversation as much as for the beer’, an old-fashioned pub building and most importantly the ‘atmosphere’ of the pub are all still heavily synonymous with the pub space (Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Oldenburg, 1999; Orford et al. 2009). Pubs also remain an important part of the British economy. As of 2013, the beer and public house sector provided £22 billion to UK GDP (British beer and pub association, 2014). Even with pubs’ associated social and economic benefits and despite their place within the popular imagination as something far more than simply a commercial space for selling beer, a holistic approach to studying the iconic British public house nevertheless remains under-developed.

The term public house was first coined in the 17th century in England as an umbrella term for inns, taverns and alehouses (Clark, 1983). Since then, the public house or pub has formed a central part of British culture (Jones et al. 2002). Traditionally, pubs have carried with them an identity linking them to the culture surrounding them. Despite the key function of the public house being the sale of alcohol, and more recently food, it has also provided a social hub for urban and rural communities (Andrews and Turner, 2012). Historically, the pub is a setting with opportunities to socialise, play games and even take part in transactions (Orford et al. 2009).
Over time, the nature and condition of the British public house has undergone a transformation (Greenaway, 1998). For example, the pubs of the 1930s were often restricted and overcrowded spaces predominately for men to gather after work and consume beer. Towards the 21st century pubs became comfort-orientated, more suitable for both men and women of all ages to enjoy alcoholic and soft drinks. However, changing cultural norms and legislation have posed several challenges for the trade, especially over the past 40 years. Since 1982, pubs have decreased in numbers by almost 20,000 to the current figure of around 48,000 (British beer and pub association, 2014).

One major factor impacting the pub sector came in 1989, in the guise of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission beer orders. (Abbott, Lawler and Ling, 1998). This had the most severe effects on the big 5 national breweries at the time: Allied, Bass, Courage, Scottish and Newcastle and finally Whitbread. During the 1980s, these breweries owned around 70% of the pub market (Preece, 2008). The commission decided that there were too many ‘tied houses’: pubs where beer types and prices were controlled by the owning brewery. To reduce these monopolistic practices, breweries were ordered to sell half of their pubs over the limit of 2000. Around 11,000 pubs were sold in this process (Jones et al. 2002).

In the two decades following the beer orders, the large national breweries ceased to control the pub market. The breweries’ loss became the pub companies’ (pubcos’) gain. Pubcos took the place of the big 5 breweries, as a small number of pubcos came to own a high concentration of pubs (Sandiford and Divers, 2014). Although not all follow the practice, pubco establishments are associated with branded and managed estates, something not representative of the ‘traditional’ pub. (Clarke et al.2000). Pubcos now make up around two fifths of pub ownership, as do independent owners, leaving one fifth of pubs owned by breweries (Helsey and Seely, 2015). One such brewery is Everards, the setting of this research.
Other external pressures on the public house sector have included: the public place smoking ban, improvements in home entertainment systems, cheap alcoholic alternatives from shops and supermarkets, the UK recession, government emphasis on the health implications of binge drinking and high beer tax margins (Knowles and Howley, 1998; Andrews and Turner, 2012). According to a governmental report, around one fifth of pubs have closed since the year 2000 due to a confluence of these factors (Helsey and Seely, 2015). The gradual decline of the trade underlines the importance of better understanding, maintaining and enhancing the attractions of the pub space.

1.2 Research in the pub space

The above discussion gives an overview of the state of the pub trade today. As aforementioned, it is a sector which is steadily in decline. This has led researchers to look at ways of reversing this decline. For example, Andrews and Turner (2012) put forward certain strategies for the survival of the sector. They recommend an active management approach within pubs that maximises profits and decreases losses. However, as Pratten and Lovatt (2002) suggest, the pub sector’s narrow focus on profits has led to the closure of rural and more traditional public houses, to the dismay of the public. There is therefore seemingly a paradox between what pub-goers may want (the more ‘traditional’ rural pub) and the lack of profitability of such outlets for the owning party.

Rather than adopting the active management approach to improving profits, the research presented here proceeds from the perspective of the customer. That is, the research attempts to identify what attracts people to pubs, rather than assuming what the core traits are through which profits might be improved. This approach differs distinctly from a more corporate focus on profit and loss margins, like that suggested by Andrews and Turner (2012). Active management appears ineffective without first
establishing the most important components of the pub space. Perhaps surprisingly, however, research exploring what makes pubs attractive is lacking.

The most exhaustive research of the pub space comes from the Mass Observation study (1943). This research took place in the northern setting of Worktown (pseudonym), and gives an extensive review of all aspects surrounding the pubs in that area. This includes the amount of beer consumed on average, the topics of conversation, pub-goers’ choice of clothing and what rooms were in the pubs. This only touches upon the hundreds of aspects of the pub the Mass Observation study describes. Many of the ideas presented by the study have become outdated, being over 70 years old. However, some fundamental features of the pub remain intact, such as the pub being a social institution and open to anyone (Oldenburg, 1999; Sandiford and Divers, 2014; Knowles and Dingle, 1996).

Researchers have conceptualized the pub as a social institution by referring to it as a ‘third space’, or ‘third place’ (Oldenburg, 1999). A third space is a setting which is distinct from home or work. It is in these spaces that individuals can experience ‘social equality’ as they are open to anyone, meaning demographic distinctions are not existent (Oldenburg, 1999, p.42). Friendships exclusive to a third space are not as deep as those in the outside world. Instead, friendship is on a more superficial level. This is not a negative trait of these spaces, however. The lack of burdens as well as the heightened accessibility and availability of these more superficial friendships gives them a positive edge over the ‘closer’ relationships of the external world. It is perhaps on this idea that the sociality of the pub space rests. Friendships exclusive to the pub space are not costly to the pub-goer, as there are decreased obligations associated with them. In other words, the pub-goer can enter and leave the pub at any point and not have to heed the expectations of others.
In line with the pub being implicated as a social third space, recent research has examined the pub as a community institution. While not comparable in level of detail to the Mass Observation study, there have been some notable studies in this vein. In particular, Orford et al. (2009) interviewed 79 heavy drinkers in Birmingham. They explored the importance of communities within the pub space and how the pub functions as a wider part of local community. This research gives insight to some of the important features of the pub space which aid sociality, such as atmosphere.

Research has also focused on the role of the pub in rural settings. For example, research from Sandiford and Divers (2014) and Mount and Cabras (2015) both address the pub’s social function within villages. Admittedly, the archetypal pub is often one which is associated with a rural village setting and considered a hub of the village community (Clarke et al. 2000; Knowles and Dingle, 1996). However, this overlooks the sociality associated with more urban pubs, such as those in towns and cities. This is perhaps due to the anticipated accessibility to communities and social integration when researching in sparsely populated rural areas as opposed to densely populated urban ones.

Unlike that of the Mass Observation study, contemporary research fails to take up a holistic approach to the pub space. The research has largely focused on the social benefits of the pub, thus effectively closing off attention to the physical, tangible space and to the role it plays in pubs’ provision of opportunities for sociality. Beyond what is taken for granted or reported in popular media, it is not clear which features distinguish the pub from other spaces.

This brief discussion begins to suggest the need for research which holistically explores the pub space and its attractiveness for those who frequent it. The research at hand is therefore interested in addressing the shortcomings of research in the pub space. The
following section describes the objectives of this exploratory research as well as presenting the research questions adopted.

1.3 Objectives and contributions of this research

This thesis addresses a lack of research of the pub space. For this research, the pub is taken neither as simply a service setting nor as an unremarked-upon backdrop to other research questions. Rather, the focus is on the pub space from the perspective of the pub-goer/users, in order to explore the key tangible components that shape the intangible benefits associated with the pub experience.

In addressing the shortcomings of the current public house literature, this research adopts the following research questions: What are the tangible aspects and intangible benefits of the pub space? How do pub-goers perceive the tangible features of the pub space? In what ways do the tangibles of the pub space contribute to intangible feelings associated with the pub experience?

In order to address these questions, a qualitative method of data collection is adopted. Semi-structured interviews with pub-goers were carried out to explore their understandings of the attractions of the pub space. An interpretivist approach to the data is also adopted, in recognition of the anticipated deviation between pub-goer responses and experiences. This research therefore considers all pub-goer perceptions of the pub space to have equal significance, and to be context-dependent. A quantitative methodology, such as that used by Mount and Cabras (2015), would limit pub-goer responses and not aid the exploration of what draws people to the space. This research therefore focuses on finding patterns (and contradictions) across pub-goers’ perceptions of pubs.
1.4 Context of this research

This research is partly funded by Everards Brewery and Everards pubs served as research sites. Everards is a medium-sized brewery which recently celebrated its 165th anniversary. Their 170 pubs are spread across the East Midlands, with the majority in Leicestershire. They operate a tenanted house arrangement, which means that each pub has an appointed licensee who pays Everards rent to run the establishment, but the buildings remain owned by Everards. Comparatively, managed estates employ individuals to run their pubs on a salary. Free houses are owned by each individual licensee. Everards does not market its pubs as a chain; they do however have the Everards logo on the exterior of most of their pubs and on items within the space such as menus and glasses. This differs from between each pub owned by Everards. As with non-chain pubs more broadly, their pubs express a sense of individuality and identity (Clarke et al. 2000). The project used six of these pubs as research sites, with the consent of Everards and the respective licensees.

In adopting an interpretivist stance, this research does not suggest that the responses of Everards pub-goers are representative of all British pub-goers. Further, it does not suggest that Everards pubs are representative of all pubs in Britain. However, they bear a greater resemblance to non-chain pubs than chain pubs. The individuality of Everards pubs promotes a multiplicity of responses from pub-goers which may not have been the case if this research had taken place in chain pubs. The six pubs visited in this research were chosen as they differ across several dimensions to give a wider picture of the pub space. For example, two of the pubs were in more rural areas, while the others more urban. The following structure gives an outline of this research.
1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter two gives the background literature of this project. This chapter begins by discussing authenticity and nostalgia. The review logically moves toward linking the two concepts, as they are both means of escape from the contemporary consumer climate. This gives background to a central theme of this project, using the pub space for escape.

Two ‘camps’ of authenticity literature are put forward, both of which are shown to be applicable to the pub space. Firstly, the chapter describes the objective properties inherent in objects which confer authenticity. Secondly, the proposed subjective experiences and processes behind consumer assessments of authenticity are put forward. The notion of historical nostalgia (cf. Stern, 1992) is also addressed as well as its practical applications in consumer settings. This chapter begins to suggest a link between authenticity and nostalgia when applied to objects on a spatial-temporal level. This hence leads to historical physical properties, neighbourly service and community, all of which are associated with the past, being suggested as potential manifestations of authenticity and historical nostalgia within the pub space, further asserting a link between the two concepts. This implicates key features of the pub space in escape.

Finally the tangible and intangible nature of the pub space is discussed. The tangibles of the space are suggested to allow intangible benefits, such as escape. Included here is a discussion of the importance of atmosphere within the pub space. Relevant models of atmosphere are evaluated and are suggested to not be adequately applicable to the pub space, highlighting the need for a model with more specificity to the pub space.
Chapter 3 is split into two sections. First, the research problem and rationale for the adopted research questions are outlined. Second, the methods adopted during this research, as well as reflections following the research process, are outlined. It is here that both practical and ethical limitations and considerations will be put forward.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings and analysis, building the interpretation of data through consideration of previous research. Chapter 4 broadly outlines the key tangible components of the pub space for the pub-goer: physical features, staff and clientele. This chapter provides examples of when these features are perceived positively and negatively by pub-goers.

Chapter 5 outlines how each of the three key tangibles of the pub space contributes to the intangible benefits of experiencing the pub. In particular, authenticity and historical nostalgia (cf. Stern, 1992) are both found to be means of experiencing the intangible benefit of escape, and are both anchored in the tangibles of the pub space. The pub is therefore shown to be a multi-dimensional space of escape, applying the ideas of research in both the authenticity and nostalgia fields (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Cutcher, 2008; Turner, 1987).

Chapter 6 brings together the findings from chapters 4 and 5 to propose a model of atmosphere specific to the pub space. The chapter suggests that the tangible attributes of the pub (primarily, physical features, staff and clientele) constitute atmosphere, a further trait of the pub space. This model is both holistic and non-static, and attention is given to how several intervening variables, external and internal to the pub-goer, impact on the atmosphere.

Finally, chapter 7 concludes by summarising the key research findings. The chapter then addresses reflections and limitations of the current research. Finally, the research problem and research questions are readdressed and recommendations for future research put forward. Specifically in the context of the pub, escape and atmosphere remain in need of further exploration.
1.6 Conceptual contributions to knowledge

This project contributes to conceptual knowledge in three ways. Firstly it applies the notion of escape to the pub space, something which remains underdeveloped. Secondly, this research suggests a relationship between authenticity and historical nostalgia, something previous literature has for the most part avoided. Finally, a model of atmosphere specific to the pub space is developed, something not yet fully established in the literature. The following literature review will give context to these conceptual contributions to knowledge.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review begins to discuss important conceptual themes within the pub space in addressing it on a more holistic level than previous research. This review logically moves to relate authenticity and historical nostalgia to the pub space, both of which are considered a means of escape from the contemporary consumer climate. In doing so, the overlapping nature of authenticity and historical nostalgia are discussed. Escape is yet to be fully established in the pub space. Therefore this review begins to link three key facets of the pub space to authenticity, historical nostalgia and hence escape: historical physical features, neighbourly service and community. It may thus be the pub space where the relationship between authenticity and historical nostalgia can be better understood, especially on a spatial-temporal level. The final theme of this review focuses on the tangible and intangible nature of the pub space, including the important trait of atmosphere. Past models of atmosphere are evaluated and suggested to not be fully applicable to the pub space. This review therefore brings together the key areas across the pub space which may be attractive for pub-goers due to their escapist appeal.

2.2 Authenticity

Authenticity is said to be a cornerstone in today’s consumer markets (Jacknis, 1990). It is a term thought to originate from museums: experts would examine if an artwork was the original piece that it claimed to be and therefore establish its authenticity (Trilling, 1972). More recently, a wide array of research has revealed the impact of authenticity on consumer markets in: champagne cellars (Kniazeva and Charters, 2011); reality television (Rose and Wood, 2005); beer branding (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink, 2008); tourist attractions (Grayson and Martinec, 2004); Scottish whiskey (Spracklen, 2011); gourmet food journalism (Johnston and Baumann, 2007); country
music (Peterson, 1997) and car brands (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006). While not exhaustively studied, authenticity does have a strong base of research which repeatedly confirms its importance in contemporary consumer markets.

Authenticity, however, remains an ambiguous term that authors tend to avoid defining. The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) associates authenticity with terms such as ‘true’, ‘genuine’ and ‘traditional’. However, Grayson and Martinec (2004) suggest a move away from a tie between authenticity and truth. Instead, they argue that authenticity only relates to certain types of truth. For example, if a consumer makes an assessment of the authenticity of a restaurant menu, this does not simply hinge on truthful information. If the menu advertises that children’s meals are available and this is in fact accurate, this does not make the menu authentic but instead only reflects truthful information. Comparatively, if it was an Italian restaurant and all the menu items were judged to originate from Italy, this may be considered authentic by the consumer.

Despite the lack of a clear definition, consumers are said to engage in a quest for authenticity in their consumption behaviour (Wang, 1999). It is also widely agreed in the field that authenticity is not a stable trait in itself that is inherent in objects, people or experiences (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006; McAuley and Pervan, 2014). Rather, authenticity is a socially constructed attribute dependent upon the opinions and perceptions of the individual consumer.

A case study illustrating the socially constructed nature of authenticity comes from Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006). MG cars have a strong cult following due to the perceived authentic nature of the brand. Consumers will often restore MG cars to their original state to create an authentic model. Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006) found that MG collectors struggle to agree on exactly what is authentic about their
restored cars. During a collectors’ competition, for example, there was a dispute between judges and collectors over what signalled an authentic car part. Appointed judges’ opinions were questioned by owners who felt their cars were completely authentic. This highlights how judgements of authenticity remain a subjective construction whether coming from an expert or a consumer. Members of the MG club in question conceded that keeping authenticity objective was too difficult.

2.2.1 Typologies of authenticity

Within the broad consensus that authenticity is socially constructed, the authenticity literature can be split into two ‘camps’ of thought: one focused on the objective anchors of authenticity, the other on the subjective experience of authenticity. While these are not mutually exclusive conceptual concerns (and indeed cut across several of the key texts noted below), they represent two different directions of attention within the existing literature and inform the design of this project.

Firstly, there is a body of research that focuses on the objective properties of objects, people and experiences that confer authenticity. Importantly, the object’s properties stimulate a perception of authenticity from the individual. For example, Boyle (2003) suggests that for something to be perceived as authentic, it must have one of these 9 characteristics: ‘beautiful’, ‘honest’, ‘natural’, ‘unspun’, ‘simple’, ‘human’, ‘rooted’ (in tradition), ‘ethical’ or ‘sustainable’ (Boyle, 2003, pp. 16-21). Something judged to have one or several of these traits is likely to be perceived as authentic. Whether an object is factually authentic or not is less important than the consumer’s perception based on his/her own expertise.

Grayson and Martinec (2004) specify two types of authenticity cues: indexical and iconic. Indexical authenticity is concerned with cues which signify originals. Objects
which have a factual relationship with something else represent indexical authenticity. This also applies to peoples’ behaviours. If two individuals act in the same way, the authentic set of actions are the ones which reveal the actor’s genuine self. If a person’s behaviour is perceived to be constructed or fake due to external reasons then they cannot be indexically authentic. An example of an object being indexically authentic could be a Victorian beer barrel. The item can only be perceived as indexically authentic if the individual knows of proof or certification that it is in fact a beer barrel made in the Victorian period. Without this perception of a factual spatial-temporal link between the barrel and the Victorian era, the object fails to acquire indexical authenticity. However, when an object physically resembles another object, it is described as an icon (Peirce, 1931-1958). Grayson and Martinec (2004) extend this idea to explain a second type of authenticity, iconic authenticity.

Iconic authenticity refers to cues which resemble objects that are indexically authentic. Iconic authenticity is influenced by an individual’s knowledge of an object or behaviour. An individual should, according to Grayson and Martinec (2004), have a projection of an indexical or original object in their minds. Therefore, if an individual saw a Victorian beer barrel on display they would consult their own ideas of what physically resembles this object and then make a judgement as to whether the barrel is an authentic copy. As long as the barrel resembles this idea, however imprecise the idea is, it acquires iconic authenticity. If the object physically differs from the expectations of an individual then it will fail to be an icon and hence not be judged to be authentic. It is important to note that indexical and iconic authenticity are not mutually exclusive. In other words, an object can have the properties of both these types of authenticity. For example, a Victorian beer barrel can be perceived as indexically authentic if it was made in the Victorian period and iconically authentic if it looks like the expectation of a Victorian beer barrel. This framework of authenticity offers an approach which is focused on the perceptions of the properties inherent to external objects, experiences and people.
Importantly, Grayson and Martinec’s (2004) view of authenticity does not relate to self-authentication or reification of the true self—a particular strand within the second camp of research within this field. For example, Wang (1999) put forward existential authenticity, referring to how an authentic experience can activate an existential state of being or help to achieve self-authentication. Consumers are said to gain a reification of the true-(or authentic) self from certain authentic experiences. Such research tends to concentrate on how authenticity is socially constructed by the individual, outside of the objective properties of the object, person or experience (for example Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). This strand of research shows how authenticity can be a widely applied trait. However, besides an interest in self-authentication, the second camp of research examines more broadly the question of the subjective intervening factors in judgements of authenticity, and the implications of having judged something to be authentic. In this regard, Grayson and Martinec’s (2004) work is also relevant, as they are concerned with consumers’ perceptions of market offerings as authentic.

For example, Grayson and Martinec (2004) focus on the properties of an object or experience in consumer assessments of authenticity. Their framework builds upon the philosophy of Peirce. Peirce took an interest in how individuals perceive things to be truthful or not (Peirce, 1931-1958). Further, the work of Peirce focuses on how cues relate to an individual’s personal experiences. Grayson and Martinec (2004) expand upon this work and apply it to authenticity. They explain how different types of cues lead to authentic judgements of market offerings.

Also indicative of the second camp of literature are those focusing on the processes the underpin consumers’ assessments of authenticity. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) posit that consumers’ perceptions of authenticity in objects and experiences are as a result of the achievement of personal goals. They suggest that consumers have the mutual higher-order goal of experiencing authenticity. To achieve this higher-order goal, consumers pursue the personal goals of virtue, control or connection. By perceiving objects or experiences which fulfil these goals, consumers can reach the
goal of experiencing authenticity. It is argued that differences in personal goals between consumers can explain why assessments of authenticity differ between consumers. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) relate this to both self-authentication and experiencing authenticity externally. As mentioned above, this project focuses on this latter application as opposed to self-authentication.

The first two personal goals implicated in consumer judgements—control and virtue—both have more applications in the context of self-authentication. Firstly, Beverland and Farrelly (2010, p.841) suggest that consumer experiences that allow ‘mastery over their environment’ and hence control, give feelings of authenticity. Control can therefore give stronger notions of the authentic self. The goal of virtue is concerned with taking part in experiences or consuming objects which allow consumers to stay ‘true to one’s morals’ (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010, p. 846). This is in line with the idea of an object which is ethical retains authenticity (Boyle, 2003). Again, keeping to moralistic values allows an enhanced sense of self.

Finally, the goal of connection has more relevance to the project at hand. While the other two personal goals are more relatable to self-authentication, connection has links to consumer perceptions and attributions of authenticity to objects and experiences. Connection also has more obvious associations to the setting of the pub space. Beverland and Farrelly (2010, p. 843) suggest that judgements of authenticity can be as a result of ‘being connected to important others, to community, place, culture, or to society in general’. Objects or experiences which allow achievement of connection lead to perceptions of authenticity. Using a relevant example, going to the pub could be perceived as an authentic experience because of the connection to others associated with the space. Especially relevant is the gained sense of community that can be associated with connection. As Arnould and Price (2000) suggest, community links can be an important feature of authenticity.

Before fully discussing notions of community and hence authenticity within the pub space, the concept of nostalgia also needs to be discussed. Nostalgia has similarly been
linked to a longing for community and so this project links the two concepts in discussions of community in the pub space.

2.3 Nostalgia

Nostalgia (coming from the Greek nosos: to return home and algos: suffering) was originally considered a physical illness for those who had moved away from their homeland (Davis, 1979). The term nostalgia was first used by a Swiss physician in the 18th century, Johannes Hofer, to describe soldiers’ extreme forms of homesickness. Despite this original medical assessment it eventually became clear that the medical symptoms experienced, including death, were in fact due to a number of illnesses such as tuberculosis (Lowenthal, 1985).

More recently, having lost its ties to medical conditions, nostalgia is considered a mental state. Davis’ quote of Meerloo puts nostalgia in its most simple form: ‘nostalgia is memory with the pain removed’ (1979, p.37). In other words, nostalgia is a device used to remember a ‘better’ time. Using its literal translation, nostalgia reflects a longing for a homely place. Rather than just being memories, nostalgia refers to filtering out the negatives and focusing on the positives of the past (Watson and Wells, 2005).

Stern (1992) outlines two broad types of nostalgia: personal and historical (also termed as private and collective nostalgia by Davis, 1979). Personal nostalgia is nostalgia from one’s lived experience. This type of nostalgia can only include personal memories and must be as a result of first-hand experiences of the individual. Conversely, historical nostalgia refers to a longing for a better past that was not necessarily experienced. This is based on idealised notions of the past and can be held by several individuals at the same time, hence why Davis termed it collective nostalgia. Stern (1992) posits that, much like authenticity, historical nostalgia can have important
impacts in consumption contexts. Advertisements can exploit consumers by using romanticised versions of the past, leading consumers to yearn for that time and influence them to buy products associated with it.

An example of the power of historical nostalgia in the context of consumption comes from the world of fashion. Vintage clothes can promote nostalgic feelings in consumers (Veenstra and Kuipers, 2013). Purchasing clothing which is representative of an idealised past can give positive identity benefits for consumers, even if the individual did not live during the period where that fashion was dominant. The strength of the vintage fashion market demonstrates how historical nostalgia, even if this was before a consumer’s birth, can be an important marketing tool. It is the benefit of experiencing anchors of historical nostalgia which will be of more focus to this research.

Historical nostalgia for a certain period can exaggerate the positives and negate the negatives of that time (Watson and Wells, 2005). In this sense, Watson and Wells argue that nostalgia can serve as a negative emotion as it leads to damaging perceptions of the present day in comparison. In their case study of a London market, several of the market-goers had a collectively positive view of the market in the past and the sense of community associated with it. This especially emphasised the degeneration of the market in the present. These nostalgic views were shared amongst several market-goers despite clear segregations between racial groups being present at that time period in the past. Nostalgia can therefore give idealised notions of the past or serve to whitewash the past in a positive manner. This can leave the present feeling insignificant in comparison. It is therefore contested whether historical nostalgia acts as a positive or negative emotion.

As mentioned, nostalgia serves to emphasise the positives of the past while dumbing down or removing the negatives (Davis, 1979). However, also loosely identified within
the nostalgia literature is the state of ‘nostophobia’, the opposite of nostalgia (Davis, 1979, p.15). This term describes negative feelings toward events of the past. In direct contrast to nostalgia, nostalgophobia gives a more positive outlook on the present in comparisons to the past (Strangleman, 1999).

Taking notice of the powers of nostalgia (and nostalgophobia), management in various industries has sought to actively use the past in order to implement change in their employees (Cutcher, 2008; Strangleman, 1999). Strangleman (1999) found the British rail industry to manipulate nostalgic perceptions of the past and replace it with a negative representation in order to make staff more open to change. The industry recognised that nostalgic longing within the industry could only hinder progression. In other words, they implemented nostalgophobia as a tool to encourage forward-thinking. This meant that staff within the railway industry experienced a more positive outlook for the present and the future in comparison to a seemingly negative past, contributing to an abandonment of past methods. However, at the same time, nostalgia was used as a marketing tool in order to capture the imagination of consumers and encourage consumption. The past is seemingly a powerful tool in consumption contexts.

2.4 Authenticity and nostalgia- an interaction?

There is a lack of research which discusses the links between authenticity and nostalgia. Despite this, authenticity and nostalgia appear to be interrelated, especially in tourism settings. For example, Bruner’s (1994) research into the New Salem tourist site took a focus on authenticity of the site as well as implicating nostalgia in the site’s attraction to the tourist.
Where research has had a focus on the relationship between authenticity and nostalgia, this has been outside of consumer settings. Turner (1987, p. 151) implicates a loss of ‘personal authenticity’ in the need for nostalgia. Turner’s notion of authenticity in this context refers to conveying the true self. Similarly, research exploring links between authenticity and nostalgia has focused on self-authentication and personal nostalgia. For example, Baldwin, Biernat and Landau (2015) found that personal nostalgia can give access to the core attributes of the self, hence helping to self-authenticate and reaffirm authentic identity. This typifies a small cluster of research in this area, but the ties between perceptions of authenticity and historical nostalgia are yet to be explored in detail.

Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) offer a rare example of research relating the authentic to the nostalgic. Firstly, they suggest that historical nostalgia has not only a temporal dimension, but a spatial one too. In other words, a physical building or site which carries traditional values from the past can be a physical manifestation of historical nostalgia in the present for consumers (what they term tradition-related nostalgia). This is reminiscent to the spatial-temporal nature of authenticity suggested by Grayson and Martinec (2004) in their typology of indexical and iconic authenticity.

Hemetsberger and Pirker’s (2006) second key finding connected assessments of authenticity to historical nostalgia. Their exploratory research focused on a farm tourist setting. Following a pre-test, they compiled a series of nostalgic and authentic images for consumers to assess in terms of liking. They were unable, however, to find farm-related images for consumers to assess which were nostalgic and not authentic. This suggests a tie between assessments of nostalgia and authenticity.

Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) build upon the ideas of Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003) who suggest that the mass consumption of retro brands is due to a search for the authentic. They suggest authenticity to be a pre-requisite of tradition-related
nostalgia (referred to here as a physical manifestation of historical nostalgia). It must be taken into account that the research undertaken by Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) was exploratory in nature, of a small scale and took place in a specific tourist context. It is therefore important not to draw prescriptive conclusions from their findings. Nonetheless it does raise the issue of whether authenticity and historical nostalgia are related and how this relationship manifests itself in consumer settings. This is a question that the literature currently fails to address, leaving scope to investigate the link between the two further.

There would appear to be a logical relationship between authenticity and historical nostalgia. Each concept is involved in positive valuations of consumption objects (or experiences). Both authenticity and historical nostalgia can also depend on perceived links to the past, through perceived indexicality and iconicity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004) and links to an imagined positive notion of the past (Stern, 1992). The concepts appear to closely align when both are applied on a spatial-temporal dimension.

However, authenticity and nostalgia differ on objective and subjective levels. The objective and subjective nature of authenticity relies on an interaction between the individual (the subjective perceiver) and the object. An object is always needed to convey authenticity and the individual is needed to subjectively perceive it as either authentic or not authentic.

Comparatively, historical nostalgia does not always rely on a physical object or experience. Historical nostalgia is as a result of an interaction between the self and historical societal reflections (Stern, 1992). The concept of historical nostalgia can therefore exist outside of spatial manifestations of history. While this may be the case, historical nostalgia can be reflected by an object which possesses historical links. While authenticity always relies on an individual’s subjective interpretations of a spatial representation (the object or experience), historical nostalgia instead always
rests upon subjective interpretations of an imagined temporal representation, namely
the past. As mentioned in the discussion of the findings of Hemetsberger and Pirker
(2006), their relationship appears to only logically exist when both concepts are
applied on a spatial-temporal dimension, such as those within the pub space. This will
be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Firstly however, both authenticity and
nostalgia need to be discussed as means of escape.

2.5 Authenticity and nostalgia- a means of escape

Despite ambiguity over their relationship, authenticity and nostalgia are both firmly
entrenched in contemporary consumer markets (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Stern,
1992). Authenticity and nostalgia have both been implicated as a means of
experiencing the benefit of escape for consumers (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010;
Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Turner, 1987; Lowenthal, 1985; Cutcher, 2008). To
describe how these means of escape manifest themselves, it is first important to
outline what a consumer needs to escape from.

The contemporary consumer climate and the conditions which come with it can leave
consumers longing for escape. This is often termed as the ‘postmodern’ age (Arnould
and Price, 2000; Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Boyle, 2003; Thompson, Rindfleisch and
Arsel, 2006; Grayson and Martinec, 2004). However, Arnould and Price (2000), among
others, critique the term ‘postmodern’ as being a far too broad umbrella that lacks
specificity. The theoretical debates about the adequacy of the term ‘postmodernity’ go
beyond the scope of this project; thus, the focus is directed specifically at the material
conditions that contemporary consumers face, such as the ever-deepening
penetration of markets into everyday life.
Contemporary consumer cultures—such as the one within which sits this project—are intertwined with an information age in which social life and the economy are dominated by marketing (Arnould and Price, 2000). Ritzer (2007) states that, as a result of globalisation, today’s consumption contexts are dominated by examples of ‘nothing’ as opposed to ‘something’. As well as globalisation, Arnould and Price (2000) argue that the related notions deterritorialisation and hyperreality also contribute to consumers’ sense of loss and hence perceptions of ‘nothing’.

Deterritorialisation broadly refers to ‘the tearing apart of previously stable social structures, relationships, settings, and cultural representations’ (Kale, 2005, p.66). In other words there is a blurring of the boundaries between cultures due to the far-reaching impacts of globalisation. Cultures which were once divided and offered stability for individuals, no longer exist. As Arnould and Price (2000) suggest, mass immigration of individuals from different backgrounds into formerly stable cultures can limit notions of community and reduce traditional sources of meaning. This is due to the conflict of differing norms and experiences between individuals.

Deterritorialisation, therefore, is a ‘process of spatial and temporal dislocation’ which can leave consumers with uncertainty in their lives (Arnould and Price, 2000, p.143).

The contemporary consumption climate is flooded with signs and images which simulate originals (Arnould and Price, 2000). This creates what Baudrillard (1983) calls a condition of ‘hyperreality’ in which boundaries between fantasy (the simulated) and reality are blurred, such that simulations become ‘the real’ for consumers. However, despite these signs and images appearing to be new, they are just a recreation of more meaningful originals. Consumers are therefore left to differentiate the real from the fake, thereby contributing to uncertainty in everyday life. For example, in the context of the pub: pubs strategically play up their physical features (e.g. a real, original, or restored, or new/replica fireplace) to give the impression of heritage and meaning. This blurs the notions of real and fake for the pub-goer. It is important to note that the simulated can still be perceived as authentic, as captured by Grayson and Martinec’s
(2004) notion of iconic authenticity. Both deterritorialisation and hyperreality can, however, create uncertainty for consumers through a perceived loss of meaning and tradition.

Critiques of contemporary consumer culture identify a lack of substance and meaning in consumers’ lives. Ritzer’s notion of ‘nothing’ is associated with an abundance of ‘Nonplaces’, ‘Nonthings’, ‘Nonpeople’ and ‘Nonservices’ (Ritzer, 2007, p.59). All of these subtypes of ‘nothing’ come together to leave consumers facing consumption contexts and products which lack humanity, lack ties to a certain time or place and lack ‘enchantment’ (Ritzer, 2007, p.82). This contributes to a perception of ‘nothing’. Accompanied with the uniform nature of the marketplace, perceptions of ‘nothing’ leaves consumers searching for distinctive market offerings of ‘something’ (Ritzer, 2007, pp. 36-38). In other words the sense of loss associated with the contemporary consumer climate needs to be replaced by something meaningful.

Consumers must therefore adopt methods of escape to achieve respite from these conditions created by globalisation, deterritorialisation and hyperreality. Past research into escapist paradigms implicate both authenticity and nostalgia as separate methods of achieving the benefit of escape (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Turner, 1987; Lowenthal, 1985; Cutcher, 2008).

2.5.1 Escape through authenticity

As aforementioned, authenticity tends to be related to originality, the real and the true (Bruner, 1994; Grayson and Martinec, 2004). Contrastingly, associated with the current consumer climate is the fake and the hyperreal (Grayson and Martinec 2004; Arnould and Price 2000). The ‘artificiality’ associated with this current period leads consumers to look for something ‘more real’ (Belk, 1990, p. 671). Something perceived
as authentic, therefore, has a solid verification of meaning and existence in a world where such qualities are felt to be lacking. For example, sitting in a pub that has been verified as the oldest pub in the world gives consumers the chance to experience something real in a world dominated by the fake.

It is not just the literal meaning of authenticity which is a means of escape for consumers. Beyond objects being verified as original or ‘real’, consumption contexts which portray authenticity rest upon several elements, such as those presented by Boyle (2003). With perhaps the exception of ‘beautiful’, eight of Boyle’s elements juxatpose features of today’s society. The elements of ‘honest’, ‘unspun’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘ethical’ specifically all contradict the capitalist profit-driven nature of corporate companies. As Ritzer (2007) suggests, profits can be put ahead of consumer satisfaction, often leading to the perceived opposite of these elements of authenticity. The advancement of technology and innovations of the present day contrast the authentic elements of ‘natural’ and ‘simple’. The fast-moving nature of the present leads consumers to seek something seemingly simpler and less artificial. Something ‘rooted’, especially in tradition, offers something authentic for the consumer in a time where traditional values are diminishing (Turner, 1987). Finally, something ‘human’ is authentic; this especially applies to the dehumanisation of service which will be discussed in detail in the context of the pub below. Authenticity, therefore, offers something more for consumers where it might be lacking in today’s consumption climate.

2.5.2 Escape through nostalgia

As Lowenthal suggests: ‘The past offers alternatives to an unacceptable present’ (1985, p.49). It is distant from the stressors and demands experienced today and a place where consumers do not need to answer to anyone. Escaping an uncertain present associated with a sense of loss can therefore rest on a temporal dimension,
through the use of nostalgia. Nostalgia offers access to a representation of a glorified past which can be conjured at any time by an individual (Lowenthal, 1985). Historical nostalgia can especially help consumers escape the woes of today (Stern, 1992). As Stern (1992) suggests, it does not matter why a distant past is longed for, the key determinant of this method of escape is that the past is perceived as superior to contemporary life.

The impact of the contemporary consumer climate, especially the notions of globalisation, deterritorialisation and hyperreality, encourages consumers to use nostalgia to escape these conditions (Arnould and Price, 2000; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001; Stern, 1992). Consumers seek objects and experiences which are associated with ‘the glory of the past’, in an attempt to reify traits and values associated with yesteryear (Belk, 1988, p.149). The past is perceived to have a slower pace than the fast-moving present and therefore offers a more certain, simple and stable time for the consumer (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). In this sense, the nostalgic past is a haven from the ills of the present.

Beyond the reaffirmation of the self which personal nostalgia can offer (Davis, 1979), idealised notions of the past often lead to notions of community which are not so present in today’s society. Individuals are said to long for community and social interaction due to increased deterritorialisation (Arnould and Price 2000). Historical nostalgia can access an idealised notion of more rural premodern times (Turner, 1987). It can be this idea of the past, especially when looking for community and simplicity, which consumers may fantasise about. The notion of a strong ‘village’ community, where social interaction and traditional values are still prominent, directly opposes the lack of social integration today. It is for this reason that consumers are said to look for cues in the present which represent a not too distant but more simple past, especially when this offers a sense of community (Cutcher, 2008; Williams, 1985).
Despite the fact that both authenticity and nostalgia are implicated as a means of escape for consumers, their relationship has still not been clearly defined. Evident from the above discussion of escape is that they both share an underlying factor, a point of difference from the norm. Authenticity is more implicated in spatial (or physical) difference, while nostalgia more on temporal difference. However, building upon the work of Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) and Grayson and Martinec (2004), the potential spatial-temporal elements of both authenticity and nostalgia within the pub space will be discussed below. Escape through difference offers consumers the chance to feel ‘enchanted’ and offers respite from the ills associated with today’s consumption climate (Davis, 1979; Lowenthal, 1985).

2.6 Nostalgia, authenticity and escape for the pub-goer

The pub presents itself as a third space which is implicated in escape. The definition of a third space suggests that the pub is an escape from both work and home (Oldenburg, 1999). Despite the apparent clear links between the pub and escapist themes, escape in the pub space has not been actively explored. Using previous research, however, it is possible to draw links between the pub space and escape.

The public house, despite its long tradition as a British hospitality setting, has not avoided ties with the contemporary consumer climate (Clarke et al. 2000). The influx of pubcos, following the ruling of the Monopolies and Mergers commission, eventually led to the emergence of branded pub chains (Pratten, 2006). It is these branded pubs which are most associated with characteristics of the wider consumer market within the pub sector. Clarke et al. (2000), who pay particular attention to the ties of the contemporary consumer climate with pubs, outline some of these characteristics. They suggest that chain pubs are associated with the notions of hyperreality and uniformity as well as being more profit-driven as opposed to more customer orientated.
Accompanied with the rise of branded chains is a general sense of loss with regard to the ‘traditional’ pub (Sandiford and Divers, 2014). Clarke et al. (2000) argue that the idea of the premodern pub of the early 20th century and further beyond could be identified as the archetypal ‘traditional’ pub for most individuals. They suggest that pub-goers share a longing and hence a historical nostalgia for this this archetypal pub despite it ‘existing’ before today’s pub-goers were born. In stark contrast to the uniform identity of pub chains, premodern pubs are said to have retained individual identities (Clarke et al. 2000). The individuality of each pub was something that pub-goers could relate to as the pub signified a meaningful space. Similarly Watson and Watson (2012, p.693), in their case study focusing on the narratives surrounding pubs and beer, found a participant to posit:

‘Once upon a time, there were cosy pubs in every little village in which everybody was friendly and where you got authentic local non-industrially-brewed beer and nice food just like your mother used to make’.

This quote typifies the historical nostalgia Clarke et al. (2000) suggest is present within pub-goers. Also lent support from this quote, is the idea that the premodern pub was organically formed and had associations with reality (rather than hyperreal reconstructions of reality). It is hence a hypothetical pub space which appeals to consumers’ longing for both authenticity and nostalgia. Pub-goers may be expected to search for or frequent pubs which are more representative of this nostalgic ideal. For example, Sandiford and Divers (2014) found pub-goers from a northern village to perceive ‘wet’ pubs (those more focused on beer sales) as more traditional, so this type of pub could have more appeal to pub-goers.

While the ideas of Clarke et al. (2000) offer theoretical ties between the public house of the past and notions of authenticity and nostalgia, they also raise the question of the factual existence of the archetypal premodern pub. Clearly the pub existed in premodern society, but the romanticised idea of a real, traditional drinking outlet filled with character and individuality could be an exaggeration when describing the pubs of the past. Historical nostalgia can represent a longing for aspects of a time which
actually never existed and hence whitewashing of the past in a positive light (Rosaldo 1989). This research suspects that this is the case with this idea of the premodern pub, but importantly this does not affect notions of historical nostalgia for the pub-goer.

Not addressed by Clarke et al. (2000), however, are the differences expected between notions of the ideal pub of the past. They suggest that there is a general longing for the ‘archetypal’ premodern pub, but this ideal pub is a socially constructed phenomenon which will differ from person to person.

Evaluations of pubs as a setting of escape thus rest on people’s knowledge of an ideal or imagined past. That knowledge is understood in this project as part of a consumer’s field-specific cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital refers to an individual’s own set of acquired tastes, skills, behaviours and knowledge. Cultural capital feeds into an individual’s habitus. The habitus is what an individual uses to categorise and configure their external world. The way in which an individual thinks, acts and feels is as a result of their habitus.

Cultural capital is categorised in two ways for the purposes of this project. Firstly, an individual possesses general cultural capital; this may be mostly defined by their occupational status, educational attainment or even more broadly their class position. Secondly, and of focus to this project, is field-specific cultural capital. The habitus can be put to use in different fields where individuals can compete for placement in the social ladder specific to that context. This placement is as a result of the evaluations of other members of the space who have the ability to ascribe their legitimate social position in that field. This research therefore focuses on field-specific cultural capital, where the field is the pub space.

Acquired field-specific cultural capital informs pub-goers’ evaluations of establishments as well as their ideals. This is particularly relevant to the discussion above of the archetypal premodern pub. This research therefore suggests that cultural capital explains the expected differences between individuals’ notions of the
‘archetypal’ or ‘traditional’ pub which they may long for. Pub related cultural capital is constructed from previously acquired knowledge of the pub space. A pub-goers’ cultural capital underpins consumer assessments of the pub space. Personal preferences, nostalgic longing and authentic assessments are subsequently contingent on an individual’s own accumulated cultural capital.

Cultural capital can also inform individuals of which objects and experiences may allow escape. This is particularly relevant to the pub space and hence the current project. If one has the cultural capital to interpret a pub as having, for example, a 17th century building then they may be more likely to enter the space due to its potential authentic and nostalgic properties. The following discussion therefore addresses the potential spatial representations of authenticity and nostalgia, and hence escape, within the pub space, namely through its physical features, its modes of service and its notions of community.

2.6.2 Escape through physical features

Building upon the suggestions of Clarke et al. (2000), there is potential for anchors of escape within the pub space of the present day. Although yet to be studied, authenticity and nostalgia appear relatable to certain features of the public house in general. The clearest potential manifestation of authenticity and nostalgia within the pub space comes from physical features. Many public houses present features, externally and internally, of bygone eras due to the age of the trade and also reflective of the history of the individual pub itself (Clarke et al. 2000). Pubs therefore express tradition, encapsulating one of Boyle’s (2003) elements of authenticity (rooted).

The age of the pub trade spans hundreds of years (Clark, 1983). Pubs which reflect their age may therefore offer consumers the opportunity to perceive indexical and iconic cues of authenticity. For example the fireplaces and grained woodwork mentioned by Orwell (1946) can still be features of pubs today. Features such as these,
which retain a spatial-temporal link to the past, can convey authenticity to the consumer. It is likely that cues within pubs would act as iconic representations of authenticity. Older pubs would struggle to retain most original features within the pub space, with the exception of building layout. As Grayson and Martinec (2004) suggest, it does not matter if features are an imitation as long as they represent an original in assessments of authenticity. Pubs, even those gone under numerous refurbishments, can therefore convey authenticity through their interior and exterior features.

Similarly, historical nostalgia is relatable to a pub’s physical features. Lowenthal (1985) comments that, with age, buildings become more meaningful and hence more attractive for the consumer. In the context of the pub, Knowles and Dingle (1996) suggest the pub to be linked to heritage tourism. In their discussion of the pub and nostalgia, they suggest that overseas visitors often visit pubs to experience the history associated with them. The pub can also encourage tourists to ‘live in the past for a while’ (Knowles and Dingle, 1996, p. 36). Pub spaces which represent pub-goers’ notions of the archetypal premodern pub may be especially nostalgic for pub-goers (Clarke et al. 2000). Much like authenticity, this spatial-temporal nostalgia can manifest itself as a means of escape for consumers. As Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) suggest, physical places of continued tradition retain historical nostalgia for consumers. There is scope for the perceivably older physical features of a pub, when reflecting a pubs history, to offer nostalgia and hence escape for the pub-goer.

Importantly, these features are not being purchased by consumers but instead make up the space of consumption, the public house. This research is thus concerned with how physical features can convey authenticity and nostalgia when consumers are present within the space. This is most analogous to perceptions of authenticity and nostalgia within tourism research (for example Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Bruner, 1994).
2.6.3 Escape through service

Staff and service within a pub present another potential anchor of escape within the pub space. The pub is a hospitality setting where drinking takes place (Orford et al. 2009); it therefore is also a space where consumers experience service. Customer service has been widely affected by the contemporary consumption climate (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001; Ritzer, 2007).

An increasingly common feature of today’s consumer culture is the shift from person-oriented to more dehumanised methods of service, such as ‘McDonalised’ and system-oriented service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). With the rise of mass production and mass corporations, more efficient and cost-saving strategies for customer service have become the norm. Using the example of a multinational chain food restaurant, individuals are employed on a minimum wage, with little training for the low level skillset required. The emphasis for these employees is on serving as quickly as possible. While there is still human-contact in this type of service, it is limited and is likely to follow a corporate script. Although this technique is cost and time effective from the side of the company, it leaves the consumer lacking a person-oriented service which was once the norm. This ‘McDonalised’ service has become a cornerstone of the contemporary consumption climate.

System-oriented service takes this a step further by completely removing the human element of service and instead letting the consumer take care of some of the workload. A good example of this is the recent boom in self-service machines in supermarkets (Sharp, 2014). A more relevant example would be a pub-goer pre-booking food tables at a pub via the internet or a mobile phone app. Consumers find themselves completing their own transactions without any interaction with another human, with the exception of when there is a problem with the process. The direction of this fast-moving consumer culture appears to be an increasing dehumanisation of customer service and is said to leave only the high-paying or elite consumer with access to a more personalised or real service (RItzer and Stillman, 2001). A high paying
customer justifies more time and effort being provided from the side of the seller. The everyday or low-paying customer, therefore, is left with little opportunity to experience a service which is authentic or nostalgic (service representative of a time gone by) without paying for this ‘premium’ service.

In an attempt to rebuild trust from consumers, companies have adopted strategies such as decoupling (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). Decoupling refers to the construction of external images for consumers which contradict more corporate internal processes. This reduces the perceived ties of a company with characteristics of the contemporary consumption climate which consumers may wish to avoid. One example of decoupling, paying particular attention to service, comes from Cutcher (2008). In this case study of an Australian bank network, Cutcher (2008) was able to explore the benefits of decoupling.

Each bank branch had undergone a complete restructuring, appealing to the authentic and nostalgic longing of the consumer. Analogously to the licensee in a pub, each branch was decentralised in that it had one manager who made major decisions within their own branch. This decoupling from the corporate nature of the business gave customers a nostalgic experience of a time where the impersonal and profit-focus of customer service was not so much the norm. The bank’s decoupling also involved a loosened corporate hold on how customers received service, giving the customers the impression they were being specifically and locally dealt with. Each branch of the bank had a concentration on giving neighbourly service, offering consumers ‘something’ as opposed to ‘nothing’ (Ritzer, 2007). Accompanied with the willingness to ‘go the extra mile’ for customers, the bank’s staff members were able to create genuine social interactions with customers as opposed to dehumanised ones (Cutcher, 2008, p.381).

Cutcher (2008) discusses how decoupling and hence a neighbourly service can act as a nostalgic device for consumers. By offering person-oriented social interactions, the
bank offered the type of service representative of the past. This type of service can therefore appeal to a consumer’s historical nostalgia for friendly service approaches. The bank’s decision to distance itself from a corporate image also gave consumers the perceptions of a locally-tied business, again more representative of a time gone by longed for by consumers. Similarly, the service offered by the bank could also be argued to be an anchor of authenticity for consumers. For example, a neighbourly service has instant links to being human, natural and unspun as compared to both ‘McDonalised’ and system-oriented service (Boyle, 2003; Ritzer, 2007). The impact of decoupling on customer service can therefore offer consumers the chance to escape through nostalgia and authenticity.

Despite this specific example being in a bank setting, this project argues that the themes of escape surrounding a neighbourly customer service can also be extended to the pub. To the knowledge of this research, literature does not exist associating the services offered by pub staff and the chance to experience escape through authenticity and nostalgia. The literature does, however, suggest the pub is built upon a tradition of human-scale and customer-focus (Oldenburg, 1999). The hospitable nature of the pub is often said to rest upon the welcome extended by the licensee and staff (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). The person-oriented service associated with notions of nostalgia and authenticity, especially the associations depicted by Cutcher (2008), could therefore also be extended to the pub space. This is especially relevant to those who cannot afford the premium prices associated with receiving a person-oriented service in today’s consumer settings (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001).

Decoupling which involves neighbourly service is not just something which can benefit consumers; it can also be beneficial to staff as they are allowed to show emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). The restrictions put on staff during controlled and scripted methods of service in the contemporary consumer climate can lead to negative feelings such as ‘inauthenticity, withdrawal, alienation, and burn out’ (Smith Maguire 2001, p.387). Emotional labour refers to the ways in which staff put themselves across
to customers outside of their basic technical skills (Hochschild, 1983). In other words, emotional labour refers to job autonomy. For example, in a pub environment, staff who welcome customers and engage in meaningful conversation are showing emotional labour. Staff who can show autonomy and hence personal discretion within service exchanges, such as in Cutcher’s (2008) case study, can experience positive benefits along with giving customers feelings of escape.

2.6.4 Escape through community

The aforementioned longing for community associated with the past can be applied to the pub space. The pub is regarded as an important British institution with regards to community, whether this means the pub as part of a wider community or possessing a community in its own right (Orford et al. 2009; Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Clarke et al. 2000). As The Economist (2010) suggests, frequent closures of pubs have had negative impacts on notions of community in British society. Both Sandiford and Divers (2014) and Orford et al. (2009) express that pub-goers perceive pub closures as threats to community in urban and rural areas. The social institution of the pub is therefore widely implicated in perceptions of community.

The interlinking of the pub and community infers that the pub can be a source of historical nostalgia for community values. As Arnould and Price (2000) suggest, the deterritorialisation in today’s society leaves consumers with a lack of community links. Sandiford and Divers (2014) begin to make a link between pub communities and a longing for a sense of community which has been lost. Faced with the lack of community links in the present day the consumer can use the pub as a source of friendly social interactions hence attending to a sense of loss. However, the literature is yet to build upon these ideas and give evidence of the pub being a nostalgic anchor of escape through notions of community.
Community within the pub space could also offer consumers a source of authenticity. Using the ideas of Beverland and Farrelly (2010), the goal of connection could allow pub-goers to achieve escape. To reiterate an earlier point, it is argued that consumers who connect with ‘important others, to community, place, culture, or to society in general’ achieve the higher-order goal of experiencing authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010, p.843). By entering the social space of the pub, pub-goers can connect with others due to the ‘convivial atmosphere’ expected (Knowles and Dingle, 1996, p.32). Using Beverland and Farrelly’s (2010) framework, consumers may enter the pub in pursuit of achieving their personal goal of connection in order to reach authenticity. In support of this idea Orford et al. (2009) found the pub was used as a means of emotional connection through shared history and experience, linking the notion of connection to the pub space. This clearly implicates the pub in a search for authenticity. The pub, being a social institution, appears to offer the chance to experience escape from the woes of today through other interactions with other pub-goers despite it not being more directly explored in the literature.

2.7 Tangibles and intangibles of the pub space

This research suggests that the categories of tangible and intangible attributes of the pub space are useful in presenting consumer assessments of the pub. Wakefield and Blodgett (1999) explored the comparable elements of tangibles and intangibles within service environments such as movie theatres. This built upon the research findings of both Baker (1986) and Bitner (1992). They refer to tangibles as the physical service environment (such as building design and décor) and intangibles as the service features which are performed by staff (such as reliability, empathy and responsiveness). In this type of research, a questionnaire was designed to actively separate the two categories and guide their data to find the impacts of both tangibles and intangible in service settings.
However, this thesis treats the categories of tangibles and intangibles differently to past research in the service sector (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999; Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1991). Firstly, this research terms tangibles as not just the physical environment of the pub space, but also the individuals within that environment (staff and clientele). These individuals are physically present within the pub space and therefore are tangible to the pub-goer. The actions of the staff and clientele, such as service and being welcoming, will be treated as an extension of these tangibles and hence will be discussed within the same category.

Secondly, previous research in the service sector has focused on the intangible features specifically attached to actual service from staff rather than the consumption environment as a whole (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999). The complex multi-dimensional nature of the pub space requires this research to look past just the implications of service for the pub-goer. This research is interested in the pub environment as a whole and not just within the context of customer service. This assumes a more holistic approach to the pub as opposed to a specific focus on one element of the space.

Knowles and Dingle (1996), more relevantly to this research, specify a separation between the tangibles and intangibles of the pub space. Similarly to Wakefield and Blodgett (1999), they suggest the tangible service offerings of a pub is made up from features which can be reconstructed, such as the physical features of a pub, as well as its beer and food. In their discussion, they put more emphasis on the psychological attractions of the pub space for pub-goers than the tangible attractions. They propose these intangible elements of the pub cannot be reconstructed so easily. The intangibles they outline specific to the pub space are: ‘hospitality, friendliness, sense of belonging and atmosphere’ (Knowles and Dingle, 1996, p. 32).
While this research agrees that these more psychological traits are an important part of the service offering of the pub space, they will not be referred to as intangibles here. Instead, the notions of hospitality and friendliness will be treated as an extended part of the key tangibles of the pub space. The reward of escape will instead be discussed as an intangible benefit of the experiencing the pub space in this research. For purposes of clarity, no other features of the public house will be described as intangible. Any references to intangible benefits of the public house will refer to achieving the goal of escape through authenticity and nostalgia.

2.7.1 Atmosphere

In agreement with Knowles and Dingle (1996), an important feature of the public house is atmosphere (see also Orford et al. 2009; Oldenburg, 1999). Despite being an attractive trait, research fails to offer a detailed explanation of the components of atmosphere in the context of the British pub. Heide and Grønhaug (2006) do, however, outline the importance of atmosphere as part of the hospitality service industry. Attempts at explaining or defining atmosphere have tended to be vague in the past literature. For example, building upon previous work in the hospitality field, Edwards and Gustafsson (2008, p. 23) offer a simplistic explanation of the term atmosphere: ‘The elements of the surrounding environment in which the consumption of food and beverages takes place’. Whereas Kotler (1973, p. 50) defines it as the ‘quality of the surroundings’. Atmosphere, however, appears to be more complex than these definitions suggests. In their extensive review of atmosphere in consumption environments, Heide and Grønhaug (2006, p. 274) suggest that atmosphere is a result of an interaction ‘between people (i.e. service providers and customers) and the physical environment’. It is this explanation of atmosphere which appears most relevant to the pub.

Atmosphere is historically a term frequently used when describing pubs, as demonstrated by its mentioned importance in Orwell’s (1946) essay on the perfect
pub. Knowles and Dingle (1996) suggest atmosphere to be an integral part of the service product offered by pubs, especially for overseas visitors seeking to visit traditional British spaces. Orford et al. (2009) found, in a review of Birmingham drinkers, that atmosphere was an important theme in the responses of pub-goers. It was found that pub-goers believe atmosphere, when positive, to be ‘socially lubricating’ (Orford et al. 2009, p.76). Conversely, however, pub-goers tend to avoid negative atmospheres, such as those associated with troublesome behaviour (Orford et al. 2009). Atmosphere therefore appears to be a fundamental part of the social institution that is the British pub.

Despite interest in atmosphere in other hospitality and service settings, atmosphere has not been explored in the context of the pub space. For example, Campbell-Smith (1967) put forward an early model of atmosphere in relation to a restaurant setting. This model mainly focuses on elements of the room, ambient features and the overall appearance of staff. Despite this model now being out-dated, it shows how atmosphere is determined by the sum of numerous features, leaving a foundation for future research to build upon.

A more recent model of hospitality settings comes from Heide and Grønhaug (2006). This model encompasses more aspects of hospitality spaces than Campbell-Smith’s (1967) model, as well as taking into account the perceiver (the consumer). This model depicts a process of atmosphere. Firstly the ‘Independent Variables’ (the things the hospitality setting can choose to change) are encountered; then the ‘Intermediating Variables’ (the senses and responses moderators) dictate the perceptions of the space and finally the ‘Dependent Variables’ are the resultant measurable responses to the space, such as consumer satisfaction (Heide and Grønhaug, 2006, p.280).

This model includes great detail of the impacts on and of atmosphere, building upon a wealth of research in hospitality settings. The model offered by Heide and Grønhaug
(2006), however, presents two issues in the context of the pub and hence this research. Firstly, atmosphere is something which cannot be objective and so is not something that can be measured. As Orford et al. (2009) show, perceptions of atmosphere differ from person to person in the pub space and so are socially constructed by each individual. The model attempts to move towards a way of objectively measuring atmosphere, something this research suggests is not possible. Atmosphere’s complexity, through an interaction of the tangibles of the space and the perceptions of the consumer, makes it almost an impossible construct to measure. The perceptions of each individual consumer do not allow atmosphere to be a stable construct.

Secondly, no research in pubs was used in the formulation of this model. A model of atmosphere of the pub space needs to be built upon specific research in the context of the space. This research suggests that the atmosphere in a pub is idiosyncratic from other hospitality spaces because atmosphere is intertwined with the tradition of the institution (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). An appropriate model or conceptualisation of atmosphere within the context of the pub is therefore lacking in the literature.

**2.8 Summary of Literature Review**

The preceding literature review discusses the notions of authenticity and nostalgia. Both of these concepts have been implicated as means of escape for consumers from the contemporary consumer climate (Arnould and Price, 2000; Lowenthal, 1985; Cutcher, 2008; Grayson and Martinec, 2004). This research focuses on historical nostalgia and perceptions of authenticity in objects and experiences. These concepts are yet to be shown to have a clear link in consumer settings despite their overlapping nature in consumer and tourism research.
The above review begins to relate features of the public house to achieving the intangible benefit of escape. Authenticity and nostalgia are shown to be linked with traditional buildings, neighbourly modes of service and notions of community, all of which can be applied to tangible features of public houses (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Lowenthal, 1985; Turner, 1987; Arnould and Price, 2000; Oldenburg, 1999). Approaches to authenticity, such as the framework of iconicity and indexicality (Grayson and Martinec, 2004) and the achievement of the personal goal of connection (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010) appear especially relevant to the pub space. The traditional nature of the public house also seemingly offers tangible nostalgic anchors for pub-goers.

Finally, the above review outlines the notion of atmosphere in hospitality settings. The pub is a space where atmosphere is widely held as an important feature (Orwell, 1946; Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Oldenburg, 1999). Research in the atmosphere field has instead taken a focus on other hospitality settings such as restaurants (Edwards and Gustaffson, 2008; Campbell-Smith 1967). Contemporary models of atmosphere, such as the one provided by Heide and Grønhaug (2006), offer a holistic view of atmosphere but fail to directly apply this to the public house. The importance of atmosphere to this space in particular requires more applied research in the pub which has not yet been offered.
Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The pub presents itself as a social institution heavily embedded in British culture (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). The importance of the pub space is demonstrated by its £22 billion contribution to the British economy in 2013 (British beer and pub association, 2014). Despite these facts the pub sector is in decline. Taking this into account it is perhaps surprising that the key attractive components of the space are yet to have been outlined by literature surrounding the pub space. Research in the pub space has instead focused on specific elements of the space, such as community (Orford et al. 2009; Sandiford and Divers, 2014; Mount and Cabras, 2015). This research, therefore, addresses gaps in the literature surrounding the public house. Presented here is the research problem and the resultant research questions adopted in this project.

3.2 Defining the research problem and research questions

Firstly, recent research involving the public house fails to provide a holistic approach to the space. The key tangible offerings of the pub which attract consumers into the pub space are yet to be clearly outlined. Research tends to focus on specific elements of the public house rather than a more complete view. For example, Orford et al. (2009) take a focus on communities within and surrounding the pub. Similarly, Sandiford and Divers (2014) look at the pub as a social institution for pub-goers of today. This fails to address how a number of tangibles could interact to impact on pub-goers’ perceptions of the space. Instead, these features are often taken for granted or reported by the mass media, without proper research as evidence. This research therefore explores pub-goers’ perceptions of the tangible pub space to provide a more rounded exploration of the pub. This will allow a clearer view of what are the attractive components of the space for pub-goers.
There also conceptual approaches to the pub space which have yet to be established. For example, the pub has yet to be implicated as a means of escape for pub-goers. It is not clear why this space of consumption is yet to be associated with escape, especially because of its ties with tradition and community (Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Orford et al. 2009). Links to the past and community are both implicated as authentic and nostalgic, both of which are means of escape (Arnould and Price, 2000; Cutcher, 2008; Lowenthal, 1985). Knowles and Dingle’s (1996) notion of the pub being a historically nostalgic attraction to overseas visitors begins to link the pub to escape. However, the pub has yet to be associated with authenticity. Building upon Knowles and Dingle’s (1996) idea, this research aims to explore how the pub can be a nostalgic attraction for British pub-goers (as opposed to just tourists), as well as how the tangible pub space can be used as an authentic anchor. This research therefore explores how the tangible features of the space, namely physical features, staff and clientele, can offer intangible escape for pub-goers, something the literature has yet to attend to.

Finally, a conceptualisation of atmosphere has yet to be established specific to the pub space. This is despite it being a widely researched feature of hospitality spaces (see Heide and Grønhaug, 2006 for an extensive review). It is also accepted as an important feature of consumption settings for consumers; this is especially the case for the convivial atmosphere traditionally associated with the pub space (Orford et al. 2009; Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Oldenburg, 1999). Despite its importance, research has not investigated atmosphere specifically in the pub space. This research, therefore, explores the importance of atmosphere to the pub-goer and the key components of the concept.

The scarcity of applied research to the public house leads this research to adopt the following exploratory research questions:

**What are the tangible aspects and intangible benefits of the pub space?**
This question explores what the important material components of the pub space are, as well as how the tangibles of the space help pub-goers achieve intangible benefits. This question is explored in chapter 4. This question incorporates two further related sub-questions for the research:

**How do pub-goers perceive the tangible features of the pub space?**

This question takes a focus on the patterns which form across pub-goers’ perceptions of the tangible pub space. It explores what the important tangibles of the pub are within consumer assessments of the space. Again, this is addressed primarily and chapter 4.

**In what ways do the tangibles of the pub space contribute to intangible feelings associated with the pub experience?**

This question adopts a more conceptual approach which draws from the ideas of several authors, namely from the authenticity and nostalgia fields. This includes the elements of authenticity presented by Boyle (2003); the concepts of indexicality and iconicity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004); notions of self-authentication through the personal goal of connection (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010) and issues more generally from writings on nostalgia (Cutcher, 2008; Lowenthal, 1985; Ritzer, 2007; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001; Turner, 1987; Watson and Wells, 2005). This question therefore explores how the pub space offers multi-dimensional anchors of the intangible benefit of escape. This question is addressed in chapter 5 and 6.

**3.3 Adopted ontology and epistemology**

This social research adopted a qualitative approach as it is interested in perceptions, meanings and how the findings exist contextually (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Before conducting qualitative social research, it is a necessity to decide which ontological and epistemological stances should be adopted. Despite the importance of these positions
to social research, the adopted stances of researchers are not often explicitly outlined. Instead, the methods and applications of social research often reflect their answers to some of the key ontological and epistemological questions (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). For the purposes of clarity, this research will outline the approaches adopted. These stances are important to social research as they decide what is observed, how it is observed and what can be claimed following the results of observations (Savigny, 2008).

Ontology, or the theory of being, is based upon the key ontological question of ‘What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). In other words, can the world exist independently from one’s knowledge of it? From this question, one of two stances are typically taken by researchers: foundationalism or anti-foundationalism (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). Foundationalists posit that a real world does exist independently of an individual’s knowledge of it. This approach is akin to natural sciences, meaning an objective approach to social research. Social objects are viewed as independent to the observer (Furlong and Marsh, 2010; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Savigny, 2008). Alternatively, anti-foundationalists believe that the world is socially constructed by each individual and hence does not exist outside of one’s knowledge of it. In this view a single objective reality does not exist, instead only an experience of reality exists (Savigny, 2008).

The key epistemological question is as follows: ‘What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.108). The answer to this question is a product of one’s ontological position. As Hay (2007) states, it is a point of logic that a question of what can be known about the world must follow the answer to the question of what the nature of the world is.

A foundationalist ontological position would lead an observer to a positivist (or realist) epistemological position (Furlong and Marsh, 2010; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).
Alternatively, and of concern to the research at hand, an anti-foundationalist approach leads to an interpretivist epistemology (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). As knowledge is viewed to be socially constructed from the anti-foundationalist perspective, it is not possible for individuals to produce concrete objective views about the world around them. Instead, observations are a construction of the context they take place in. The observer, the social phenomena being observed and the method of observation all come together to create a contextual construction of meaning. This interpretivist view of the world emphasises that there can be several interpretations of an object under study and the context of the observation cannot be ignored. Elements of these constructions are likely to show patterns across individuals and cultures, something this research is interested in.

The adopted anti-foundational ontology and interpretivist epistemology has several implications for this research. Importantly, this research views consumer perceptions of pubs to be both consumer-dependent and context-dependent, something which resonates with the interpretivist epistemological position. Based on this view, this research suggests that consumers have their own socially constructed interpretations of the pub space and motivations for going. Further, this research proposes that there is not one single objective factor important in attracting consumers to the pub. The Mass Observation study (1943) highlights how it is not possible to find the ‘typical’ pub; this is something which remains relevant today. The public house is somewhere which adapts to the requirements of its surrounding area and customer base (Pratten, 2006). Every pub-goer, therefore, has their own personal ideal when it comes to the public house. This is built from their field-specific cultural capital, as discussed in the literature review. A pub-goers’ own idealised notions of what the features of a pub should be like are built from their own experiences of pubs in the past. This justifies the need for an interpretivist approach to perceptions of the pub space, so that differing opinions and preferences can be incorporated.

It is not in the interest of this research to draw causal statements of why certain consumers go to pub. Instead, this research brings together a multiplicity of consumer opinions and identifies patterns within and across these opinions. When considering
the diverse nature of public houses across not just the United Kingdom but Everards as well, it is imperative to take into account the context of the data produced by this research.

Interpretivism not only implicates the interpretations of consumers within this research but also the interpretations of the researcher (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As the observer within the interviews and the conductor of the data analysis, the researcher interprets data from their own point of view and through their own theoretical framework. An individual with different background knowledge or a different theoretical framework may interpret the data differently and hence find different themes. In this way, the data and data analysis cannot be assumed to be entirely naturalistic. Therefore, by following an interpretivist epistemology, it is crucial that it is accepted that the interpretations of this research are one of many possible views and hence not objective.

This idea is sometimes termed the double hermeneutic (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). On the first level of the double hermeneutic, a consumer will interpret what brings them to the public house. On the next level, the researcher will interpret the consumers’ interpretations of what draws them to the public house. In this case, informed by the literature review and theoretical framework, this second level is specifically engaged with the notion of pub being used as a means of escape. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) outline how a failure to recognise bias can invalidate findings within qualitative research. It is therefore important for this research to be reflexive about the methods used; the consumers interviewed and the researcher’s own theoretical interests.

3.4 Research methods: Semi-structured interviews

For the purposes of this interpretive research, the semi-structured interview was chosen as a suitable method of data collection. Exemplary studies in both pub and authenticity research utilise this method. For example, Orford et al. (2009) used the semi-structured interview as their main method to explore heavy drinkers’
perceptions of the pub space. These pub-goers were allowed freedom in their responses surrounding the pub while the interviewer could also retain a structure to questioning. Similarly, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) employed the semi-structured interview to explore how personal goals drive consumer assessments of authenticity. Using this method, they could tailor their interviews to explore how consumers came to authenticity assessments while also providing freedom in interviewee responses. The semi-structured interview, therefore, appears relevant and useful for this research. Freedom in pub-goer responses is important due to the highly variable nature of pub-goer perceptions of the pub space (for example see Orford et al. 2009).

The semi-structured interviews also allow conversations to be steered towards potential anchors of escape within the pub space, with the original focus here being on authenticity. It was the freedom of the interviews which allowed the themes of atmosphere and nostalgia to manifest themselves as important factors for pub-goers.

The open-ended semi-structured interview is a useful tool in exploring opinions and meanings. It does this through utilising an interview guide with a series of questions and probes (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Using open questions, semi-structured interviews follow a relaxed and natural conversational flow. This might not be experienced in a structured interview, which may be more akin to a verbal questionnaire (Miller and Crabtree, 1992). This flow aids the interviewer’s attempts to build rapport and hence allows respondents to express themselves more naturally and perhaps produce more valid statements (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). While an unstructured interviewing style may offer the opportunity for an even more natural feel to interviews, this method would not have allowed much guidance onto topics surrounding escape such as authenticity. For example, the interviews originally needed to cover the topic of the perceptions of physical features of pubs. This is something that the guidance of a semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to do.

Further, without the stricter control of questions in the structured interview, this method allowed more freedom of expression in terms of the manifestations of escape in the public house. The semi-structured interview, therefore, provided the correct
balance between guidance and exploration which was deemed appropriate for this exploratory research.

The use of semi-structured interviews in this research also followed on from the adoption of the meaning-based interpretivist epistemological stance (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). This method allows pub-goers to express their opinions surrounding the public house as well as articulating how they make sense of their opinions of the pub space. The semi-structured interview allows interviewee responses to be probed more deeply; this was especially useful in this research as it helped to uncover the ways in which the pub space was viewed as a means of escape. Just gaining opinions on draws to the pub space on a superficial level would not have been of huge benefit to the aims of this research. Interpretivism also emphasises that there can be no single objective view of the pub space. It was therefore in the best interests of this research to utilise the freedom allowed by semi-structured interviews. This offered the opportunity to capture the potential multi-dimensional nature of escape within the pub space. This method, therefore, provided a suitable interpretivist approach to collecting meaningful responses.

3.4 Research design

This research was funded jointly by IRSA and Everards Brewery. For this reason, the research has taken place in Everards pubs. Everards is a brewery based in Leicestershire. It is an independent family run business and has been since 1849. Everards runs over 170 tenanted pubs spread across the midlands. Each pub is a tenancy with a landlord. A uniform identity, beyond signage, is not found in Everards pubs, excluding the sale of Everards flagship beers: Everards original Ale, Beacon Bitter, Sunchaser blonde and Tiger Best Bitter. The aesthetic flexibility of Everards pubs allows each pub to display individuality, as compared to more uniform chain pubs.
3.4.1 Choosing pub sites

Six pub sites were used in this research; this sample was purposively selected based on consultation with representatives from Everards and initial site visits to the pubs. The pub site selection was then used as a device for recruiting a range of different pub-goers as interview respondents. It is thus important to note that the project does not claim to work from a representative sample of all pubs or even all Everards pubs, and that while the interviewee sample is non-random, it has been purposively designed to ensure a wide cross-section of possible British pub-goers. This allows this research to look at patterns across different individuals, reflecting the interpretivist stance.

There are multiple dimensions on which pubs can be compared, especially in a pub group such as Everards, which does not adopt a standard, chain format for its pubs. The selected 6 pubs differed on dimensions anticipated to give rise to divergence on their appeals and clienteles. One such dimension was the location of the pubs. Specifically, the 6 pubs chosen were located in: a small village (The Plough; all names are pseudonyms); a larger village (The Red Dragon); an even larger village which was more akin to a town (The White Oak); a more affluent city suburb (The Hare and Hounds); a less affluent city suburb (The Anchor) and a city centre (The Montague). A village occupant may have completely different reasons for attending a pub than someone who lives in the city centre, so it was important to try and account for this.

A second dimension on which the sites were chosen was whether they were more wet (drinks)-led or dry (food)-led in their sales. The focus of each pub may have connotations for why consumers choose to go there. A wet-led pub may accommodate certain individuals but not others, as might a dry-led pub. The Hare and Hounds and The Red Dragon were most dry-led and The White Oak most wet-led. The other pubs were relatively even in their split.

Finally, four of the pub sites had more appeal in terms of history and heritage. The Plough, The Red Dragon, The Hare and Hounds and The Montague were all examples
of older pub buildings. The Anchor and The White Oak were both more typical of later 20th century pubs and so seemingly had less draw in terms of the history of the physical pub buildings. The Hare and Hounds and The Red Dragon were in the most affluent areas. Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) for each of the pub sites are provided in chapters 4 and 5.

3.4.2 Access to research sites and interviewees

Access to public houses to conduct this research was something which raised both practical and ethical issues. In order to gain access to each of the research sites, permission was needed from each of the pub licensees, as they were the gatekeepers.

This raised the issue of the possibility of pressure or coercion from Everards toward the licensees so that they would take part. Importantly, this was not the case. Each licensee was assured of the voluntary nature of the project, both by the researcher and by a representative of Everards, and asked for permission to use their pub as part of the research. As tenants of Everards pubs, rather than Everards employees, the licensees had considerable discretion in their decisions to allow their pubs to take part in the research.

In the preliminary contact with each licensee, a representative of Everards brewery explained the outline of the project and arranged a meeting for the research to be discussed in more detail with the researcher present. The meetings often took the form of a question and answer style of conversation where the research could be explained more clearly and more could be learned about each pub for the researcher’s benefit. Each landlord verbally agreed to grant research access to their pubs following a full explanation of the research. It was also agreed that the research could take place at any point throughout the week during pub opening hours and so pub consumers could be approached freely. Practically, this was important as the pub could be attended at differing times of the day, when different consumers might be present.
3.4.3 Interview sample and procedure

Using the aforementioned semi-structured interview, pub-goers were recruited across the six pub sites. This involved utilising opportunity sampling to acquire voluntary respondents within the pub spaces. Respondents gave informed consent to take part, having been given information about the aims and reasons for the research (see Appendix A). The interviews conducted lasted between 10 and 50 minutes depending on the detail of responses given by respondents. This ensured that the respondents felt comfortable in that they could withdraw from the interview process at any time. In total, 16 interviews took place, with 18 respondents (two of the interviews were with pairs of pub-goers). Four of the respondents were female and 14 male. A detailed record of the demographics of respondents with their pseudonyms can be seen in table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range (years)</th>
<th>Pub Where Interview Took Place</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>Hare and Hounds</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>Hare and Hounds</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>Hare and Hounds</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>Hare and Hounds</td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>Hare and Hounds</td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imran</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>The Anchor</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>The Anchor</td>
<td>Skilled Manual Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>The Plough</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>The Red Dragon</td>
<td>Skilled Manual Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>The Red Dragon</td>
<td>Skilled Manual Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>The Red Dragon</td>
<td>Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>The Montague</td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>The Montague</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>The Montague</td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>The Montague</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>The White Oak</td>
<td>Semi-skilled manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55-65</td>
<td>The White Oak</td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>The White Oak</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each interview involved the use of an interview guide with probes and follow up questions (see Appendix B). The main point of exploration throughout the interviews was why each respondent attended that pub in particular and pubs in general. This key question was broken down into several probes which were informed by the past literature (Orwell, 1946; Orford et al. 2009; Jones et al. 2002 and Clarke et al. 2000), such as: the physical features of pubs; the atmosphere of pubs; food and drinks in pubs; the community around pubs, and the staff and licensees in pubs. These probes were used to explore trends and patterns surrounding perceptions of the public house as well as how this might relate to feelings of escape. Authenticity was not explicitly mentioned during the interview process at any point unless raised by the respondent. As the authenticity literature is yet to establish authenticity in the pub space, it was important not to force the issue of authenticity and allow examples of it to occur naturally. This also allowed other emerging issues, such as examples of nostalgic values, to arise organically. Following the style of semi-structured interviews, the conversations with respondents were informal and many questions were responsive to the answers already given by the respondents. This gave less limitation on responses surrounding perceptions of the public house.

Each interview conducted was either recorded by a Dictaphone or by written notes within the confines of each pub. This gave a naturalistic setting allowing respondents to play off some of their surroundings and enrich their responses. To supplement the interviews a short questionnaire (see Appendix C) was also given to each respondent to reveal a range of demographic information and their frequency of attending the pub as shown by table 3.1. This provided context to the answers of each respondent as well as potentially revealing patterns across demographics in the dataset.

Digital recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. This included the interviewer’s questions, highlighting spontaneous generation of ideas from interviewees as opposed to responses due to wording of questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). These transcriptions also included any contextual information
which was relevant to the interviews, such as signalling by respondent, in order to give a more fluid data analysis.

Throughout the visits to each of the pubs, field notes were also taken to document observations and to supplement the interviews. This helped to form pub descriptions as well as giving context to interview responses. This information is important as it gives a full picture of the context of what was found by this research. Some basic observations of the pubs visited will be discussed in the analysis chapters.

### 3.5 Reflections from data collection

It is not the purpose of this research to provide a cause and effect model of why people go to the pub. The interpretivist epistemological position encourages observations to embrace the contextual factors that are present; this helps to improve validity of the conclusions of this research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). For this reason, this discussion will outline some of the contextual factors attached to the observations of this research. As well as this, some of the practical issues this research raised will be discussed.

#### 3.5.1 Time of visits

One issue which is important to reflect upon is the time of the actual visits to the pub sites. This raises two contextual factors worth taking into account when looking at the findings of this research. Firstly, most of the interviews conducted took place in the winter or early spring months. Had this not been the case, and more summer interviews were conducted, there may have been different responses due to the changing nature of pubs throughout the seasons. The respondents were more likely to think of their short term needs in the context of the pub, in this case it may have been warmth in the winter months.
Secondly, the actual time of day that the research commenced in each pub is an important contextual factor. The research avoided late nights in the pub environment due to reasons that will be discussed below in the ethics section of the methodology. Most of the research was conducted from lunchtime through to the early evening. Admittedly, this limited the pub-goers who could be approached to people who chose to attend the pub in the daytime, this influenced the sample as it is retired males who appear to frequent the space during the working day. Pub-goers who attend the pub in the night time may also have different opinions on what draws them to the pub to those who attend earlier in the day. This may be especially relevant in terms of the other clientele present in the pub and what they bring as this can change throughout the day.

3.5.2 Demographic of pub-goers

The demographics of the pub-goers interviewed are another important contextual factor. The daytime pub environment was dominated by middle-aged or older men. This is reflected by the sample of respondents (see table 3.1), with several of the respondents being retired men. Women and younger men are unlikely to have exactly the same perceptions of the pub space as middle aged men. Practical access to women was made difficult in terms of recruitment as women rarely entered the pubs alone and so were difficult to recruit to take part in interviews. It is important to accept that the findings of this research do not represent all pub-goers as this would go against the adopted interpretivist standpoint. The amount of women interviewed (four) is, however, representative of the proportion of women present during the pub visits of this research.
3.5.3 Difficulties in participant recruitment

The chosen method of sampling, opportunity sampling, meant that individuals in the pub were approached by the researcher without prior warning. Throughout respondent recruitment this invoked mixed reactions from pub-goers. As might be expected, some pub-goers found the research interesting and were happy to take part. However, several respondents also turned down taking part in the research possibly due to the lack of incentive (due to ethical reasons). This meant that some of the pub spaces visited had fewer respondents than others. The preferences of pub-goers in one pub are likely to differ to those who frequent another pub, so it is also important to take this into account.

3.6 Data analyses

In order to analyse the data, the method of thematic analysis was adopted. This approach to analysis often gets overlooked as it is rarely explicitly defined by those undertaking research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This flexible approach broadly involves familiarisation with the dataset, generating initial codes and themes, reviewing these themes and finally looking for more complex links across themes (Rapley, 2011). In summary, this method involves looking across the dataset in order to find any patterns of meaning. It is suitable for different epistemological positions due to its flexible nature, including the interpretivist stance adopted here (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection. This was important as it meant that analysis and collection were part of an iterative process whereby repeated and relevant findings from the analysis could be explored more within interviews. For example, the genuine nature of staff (a finding discussed in chapter 5) was not specifically probed in early interviews but because of its repeated emergence in the analysis, the interviews were altered to include this. Similarly, informed by past
research (Clarke et al. 2000), respondents were asked about the personality of pubs. However, the early analysis showed that many pub-goers dismissed this, meaning it was given less weight in the interviews. The fluidity between the data collection and analysis, therefore, had benefits for the research process.

NVivo10 qualitative software was used for the early stages of analysis. This included the initial coding and organising the data into meaningful groups, which is not part of the deeper interpretative analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). NVivo10 was especially useful in generating the broad categories of the tangibles in the pub space: physical features, staff and clientele. The broad organisation of the data in this research is built around these three tangibles, which was not overly surprising due to the nature of the questions asked. Following this categorisation, hand coding was adopted to find more specific themes, complex links between them and exceptions to themes. Firstly, themes representing important facets of these tangibles were compiled. It was also here that manifestations of authenticity and nostalgia in the pub space were established. The later stages of coding were especially useful in drawing the relationships between the tangibles and intangibles of the pub space. Although NVivo10 could have also been used for the more complex part of the analysis, the moderate size of the data set meant that hand coding was comfortable and manageable.

A potential limitation of the process of the analysis came from the progress of the research project. As aforementioned, throughout the life cycle of the interviews and data analysis process there were changes to the interview guide as certain themes that needed exploring became more apparent. Also, certain themes which might have been of interest at the start of the research failed to prove significant in pub-goers experiences and so were not explored further. This leaves frustrations over responses given in the early interviews which might have been explored in more detail if the trends across later interviews were known at the time. This does, however, provide potential avenues for future research focusing on these emergent themes. This
research is exploratory in nature and so is expected to open up pathways for future research surrounding the public house, escape and atmosphere.

3.7 Ethical implications of this research

This research followed the University of Leicester’s Research Code of Conduct and approval was granted on 13th November 2014 (see Appendix D). However, the process of ethical approval raised several issues which needed to be outlined and dealt with. These stumbling blocks meant that the approval had to be submitted to the MMREC for further clarification. All social research of this type requires ethical approval of this type, but this research raised some particular issues: anonymity, risks involving alcohol and risks to the researcher.

3.7.1 Anonymity

Firstly, an ethical obstacle of the research was that of confidentiality and anonymity for those involved in the research. This included the respondents, any names mentioned during the interviews and any of the pub sites. Ethically, it is important that anonymity is maintained so that the identity and opinions of pub-goers are not revealed. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, this research has adopted the use of pseudonyms for pub names, any pub staff, any respondents and any other individuals mentioned during the interviews. As Everards has over 170 pubs in its estate, this will certainly minimise the risk of a breach of anonymity in terms of pub names. In keeping interview responses confidential and anonymous this minimises the risk of any consumers’ or pubs’ identities being exposed.
3.7.2 Steps to minimise the risk of alcohol

Another ethical issue surrounding this research was that data collection was conducted in licensed premises. This meant there was potential for intoxication of respondents. It was in the interest of the research to not interview anyone who was intoxicated. If this was the case it would present problems as a respondent could not give full informed consent, a requirement to take part in the research.

To combat this potential issue, several precautions were taken during the research project. Firstly, visits to the pub research sites were limited to the afternoon and early evening. This reduced risk of intoxication, as this is rarer in the daytime. As researcher, a common sense judgement was also used to ensure that respondents were not too intoxicated to take part in the research. Further, to avoid potentially intoxicated respondents, respondents were offered the opportunity to rearrange the interview to a later date at their convenience. Finally, as part of the informed consent procedure, each respondent was given the full opportunity to withdraw from the research at any point following the interviews up to the date of submission (December 2015). This allowed anyone who felt they may have been intoxicated to withdraw their data. The debrief at the end of interviews insured that respondents were fully aware of this.

3.7.3 Risks to the researcher

Finally, the nature of the research sites also meant that there were risks for the researcher. Visits to the pub sites were carried out with another researcher so that no visits were carried out alone. Further, no alcohol was consumed during pub visits. The time of visits also reduced the risk to the researcher, as this reduced the chance of encountering heavily intoxicated individuals within the pub space. Finally, visits were carried out using a car; this meant that the researcher controlled when the pub site was left, this was especially important in the circumstance that the researcher felt unsafe in the pub environment.
Chapter 4 Tangibles of the pub space

4.1 Introduction

Following on from the discussion of the tangibles and intangibles of the pub space in the literature review, this chapter will focus on presenting the key tangibles of the pub space and discussing their impacts on pub-goer perceptions of the space. This research suggests that the pub space promotes intangible benefits as a result of key tangibles within the pub space. It is therefore important to first discuss the three key tangibles identified from conversations with respondents:

1/ physical features;

2/ staff;

3/ clientele.

This research does not suggest that these are the only tangibles of the pub space but it does identify them as broadly being the three of the most important. The articulation of these tangibles in this chapter will follow the same order as they are encountered when visiting the pub. This sets the framework for the presentation of this chapter. For example, the external physical features are the first thing seen by a customer before they go into a pub. This may or may not be the reason they first go into that pub, but it still must be seen to enter it. The second points of contact with the pub, and the first social contacts, are with the staff and the fellow clientele in the pub.

The analysis of these three broad tangibles will follow a short discussion of the impact of alcohol and food in the pub space. Despite alcohol and food perhaps being the obvious draws into the pub space, they were often overlooked as compared to the three tangibles specified.
4.2 Alcohol

It is not possible to talk about the tangible aspects of the pub without first including a discussion of both alcohol and food. The pub is, first and foremost, a licensed premises which serves alcohol as well as a variety of food. While both of these tangible market offerings would appear central to why pub-goers are present in the first place, respondents did not have a great deal of focus on them throughout the interviews. The following discussion, starting with alcohol, gives an insight to the importance of the consumables (in the literal sense) for pub-goers while also explaining why these offerings may be overlooked in the pub experience.

Of the 18 individuals interviewed, five were regular ale drinkers and nine were regular lager drinkers. The remaining four, all women, either drank wine or soft drinks more regularly. The small number of non-beer drinkers in the sample made it difficult to draw themes on different drink types, so the focus of this discussion is on beer (both lager and ale).

Ale drinkers tended to be older respondents, as might be expected. Lager sales experienced a huge boom during the 1970s and onwards in the United Kingdom. This means that older drinkers will have experienced a time which was more popular for ales, before lagers took hold of the beer market (Smit, 2014). Beer choice, therefore, tends to be affected by generation. Respondents who were ale drinkers were much more likely to judge a pub on the level of beer. In other words, some respondents would choose a certain pub because of the ales that they offered. The other lager drinkers tended to not view the beer on offer at the pub as an especially important factor in their pub choice. Five respondents completely dismissed the importance of beer when they choose to go into pubs. Interestingly, both lager and ale drinkers put little emphasis on beer price. Only one respondent, Imran, said that beer price would be a big factor in his choice of pub. This may have been as a function of the sample of
respondents, as it was unlikely to be a coincidence that Imran was a regular at the pub in the lowest socio-economic area of all the pub sites.

Rob, who is a regular lager drinker, discusses his thought process behind choosing a pub within the context of beer:

Rob: If I was working away and there was an Everards two miles down the road and one next door, I’d go to the one next door. I wouldn’t drive two miles down the road, at the end of the day I drink lager, it’s pretty standard, lager. I wouldn’t drive two miles to get a beacon or a tiger or an original. I’m a lager, always have been.

Rob is someone who is mostly focused on spatial convenience in his choice of pub, choosing to go to the closest one available. In this example Rob typifies the opinions of the lager drinkers. The main lagers available in today’s market are relatively universal in pubs. In other words, pub-goers like Rob can walk into nearly any pub and expect there to be a choice of lagers available to them. This limits the ability of beers on offer to affect pub choice for lager drinkers. Lager drinkers tended to focus on facets of the pub above and beyond beer.

In direct opposition to the example of Rob, the respondents who were ale drinkers tended to express more loyalty toward Everards on the level of beer. Several of the ale drinkers, for example, enjoyed Everards Tiger bitter. This was also reflected by the fact ale drinkers had more of a focus on beer quality than lager drinkers. For example, Michael here discusses why he chooses to drink ale at the pub over home despite the increased prices at the pub:

Michael: I’m a real ale drinker so, it’s very difficult to drink... it’s never as nice. You can’t get a proper pint of ale at home can you, whatever you do. Out of bottles it’s fizzy, you buy one of those big keg things, that’s about as near as you can get. Then you’ve gotta have big kegs so...

Interviewer: So it’s mainly beer reasons, that quality you think?
Michael: Yeah, I’d say it would be the actual beer. That would be the main reason to come here than stay at home.

For ale drinkers like Michael, the quality of the beer served is an important benefit of being in the pub. Outside of the pub environment it can be difficult to recreate the consistency and taste of ales from a hand-pull at a bar. This is not necessarily the case for lager drinkers, who can recreate the quality of lager from a pub more easily by buying it from the shop. In the rare case when a lager drinker did mention beer quality in pubs, it was focused on negative experiences as opposed to positive ones. Lager drinkers were more likely to speak about pubs serving bad quality pints of lager as opposed to commending them on good quality ones, suggesting that beer quality is expected.

Craig, someone who drinks lager, ales and stout, spoke of his weariness of bad pints of lager in a particular pub:

Craig: I won’t drink the beer in there, because I know it’s bought from .... white van men. It’s not good. I know when I come here if I say to Rick it’s a bad pint he’ll test it and make sure. If it is completely.... stop it and sort it out. That’s the sort of thing you want. For some reason, white van pubs as I like to call them. ‘Nah nothing wrong with that’ and they just keep pouring until you get up the next morning and you’ve got the worst stomach ache of your life and you’re wondering what it is, definitely something wrong with the beer.

Craig here emphasises how he will not drink beer when he is uncertain about its quality. In this example, Craig is aware that the lager used is bought from an untrustworthy source which puts him at risk of becoming ill. However, at the Anchor, Craig knows he can trust the beer served, especially because he knows the licensee. Pubs like The Anchor are prepared to test the beer when customers feel it does not taste correctly and change it when needed. Pub-goers like Craig are more likely to stay loyal to establishments who have consistent beer quality and are those which are prepared to accommodate the opinions of their customer base when it comes to the taste of the beer.
As well as beer quality, beer choice was important for most of the ale drinkers and some of the lager drinkers. Peter, someone who is a member of CAMRA and has been drinking ale for over 50 years, put emphasis on traditional beers throughout his interview and here talks about his ideal pub:

   Peter: In the middle of a city obviously, with a choice of about 6 or 7 real ales, yeah. Yeah and loads of lagers for the kids, cause the kids drink lagers don’t they. You know, I think Ken up The White Dove has got 6 lagers but he’s also got 8 hand pulls.

In describing his ideal pub, Peter puts emphasis on the choice of beers which would be available. In his interview, Peter also talks about another pub he regularly visits, The White Dove. Peter appreciates the fact that there is a great amount of beer choice for him in the White Dove and views it as an important reason to go there. Older respondents like Peter tended to have a stronger interest in traditional ales being available. This does, however, contrast the opinions of some of the lager drinkers, like Rob, who feels that beer choice does not especially affect them.

Although beer was evidently mentioned throughout the interviews, there appeared to be little mention of it without it being probed by the interviewer. Respondents would rarely rank beer as one of the most important factors in the pub, with the exception of three of the ale drinkers. It may have been that alcohol can become overlooked in the pub setting by pub-goers as it is what is expected out of the pub space. This idea is analogous to the basic functions of staff being overlooked by pub-goers, as they are more interested in the parts of service which go above and beyond this. This will be discussed later in this chapter. The beer on offer is nothing out of the ordinary to pub-goers as it is what they expect from licensed premises. However, it is difficult to imagine whether these individuals would still have been sitting in the same pubs had alcohol not been available to them. It is not clear, as it was not specifically within the scope of this research, whether the intangible benefits of the public house (outlined in chapter 5) can outweigh the draw of alcohol.
Customers appear to remain satisfied with pub features such as beer until there is an impacting change. Rob, for example, provides an illustration of this (an account dealt with in detail later in this chapter): he was happy with a pub until they made a change of management. After this change, the pub regularly provided him with the wrong beer glass which meant his lager would be flat. Rob is someone who admitted he is not bothered about the beer choice in a pub and stated it does not affect which pubs he frequents. This may usually remain true, but when something happens at the pub which is inconvenient for Rob, for example using the wrong beer glasses, he no longer wants to go there. Most of the respondents go to the pub so regularly that it is likely they take the draw of beer (or alcohol) for granted, at least until something at the pub makes a negative impact on what they are drinking.

4.3 Food

Food was not heavily probed throughout the conversations with respondents, but it did feature, in part, in all of the interviews. For this reason, this discussion of food like the previous one on alcohol will not be in great depth. The food market in pubs is something which has seen a huge increase, especially over recent years. For example, Horizons (2013) reports that managed pub restaurants contribute as much as 22% to the eating marking in the UK. This is a huge proportion of the market considering the pub market was once solely focused on the sale of alcohol. It was expected, therefore, that food would receive attention from respondents despite it not being heavily probed here.

Most comments on food were focused on price. This may be surprising due to the lack of emphasis put on the price of beer by respondents. Food choice and quality did also feature in respondents’ accounts. Patrick is someone who frequently likes to eat at pubs:
Patrick: I love good food, I’m a very good cook myself. I enjoy going for a meal and having a couple of pints, an absolutely fantastic meal and go home. Simple as that. I’m not looking for anything else, I’m not looking for public transport. I go out to the pub, couple of pints, good food and just go home. I think a lot of places don’t sometimes provide that, you know.

Interviewer: so you mentioned the food. Is price something which bothers you?

Patrick: Price doesn’t bother me.

Interviewer: Is it what warrants the price?

Patrick: Correct. If it’s good enough, I don’t mind paying for it. If it’s shit, you don’t like paying for it.

Patrick simplifies a good pub experience down to having a good meal but questions whether a lot of pubs can perform to his expectations. Although Patrick claims to not put emphasis on the price of food, he does think the quality of a meal should warrant its price. Several of the other respondents did not put too much emphasis on food quality, instead focusing on ‘value for money’ and ‘getting what you pay for’.

Interestingly, the focus on food price and whether it warrants its price on the menu was not an issue frequently raised when discussing beer. It would be interesting to have a greater amount of information as to why value is much more important to respondents in terms of food. Speculatively, it could be that food or meals tend to be a larger investment of time and money than a pint of beer and so such a purchase is more meaningful. Without further probing into this topic it is difficult to comment beyond speculation as to why this may be.

While there was a large focus on food price, some respondents also mentioned the importance of food quality, making reference to the chef at a pub. Peter is someone who feels the chef is a very important part of the pub:

Interviewer: So you do think the landlords are very important?
Peter: Extremely important, and err so is the chef if you are trying to get eaters in the chef is extremely important and err I know everyone in there is certificated, you know your food is going to be cooked alright.

Peter appears to suggest that the chef in a pub can be as important as the licensee, especially in attracting customers who wish to eat. Other respondents made reference to the fact that they expect the chefs to know what they are doing and hence the food to be of a decent standard. It was also generally preferred and appreciated by respondents when the food is freshly made that day or specifically for that order as this tends to mean a higher quality meal. In general, it would appear that the chef is perceived to be one of the key determinants in food quality by respondents.

This short discussion of beer and food does not aim to minimise their importance within the pub space. Instead this discussion appears to highlight that alcohol, which at a glance would appear to be one of the most important draws of the pub space, can become overlooked by pub-goers as an expected, unremarked upon tangible. Whereas, three other categories of tangibles featured much more prominently in respondents’ accounts of the pub; these make up the rest of this chapter.

4.4 Physical features of the pub

One focus of this research was on what part, if any, the physical features of pubs play in drawing in customers. For this reason, interview questions targeted the physical features respondents wanted to experience in a pub environment. This may be for aesthetic or physical reasons. There are a large range of physical features which respondents valued as might be expected with the large differences across pubs and hence differences between pub-goers’ cultural capital. Some key themes surrounding physical features stood out in respondents’ accounts, including:

1/ cleanliness and hygiene;
2/ older physical features and modernisation;

3/ rooms.

Of the 18 respondents, six showed little or no interest in the physical features of pubs. When asked about the physical features of pubs, these respondents either overtly stated it was not something which brought them to the pub or repeatedly put emphasis on other draws instead. This emphasis was more on the social factors within the pub, such as staff or clientele, or the likes of accessibility and location. Five of these six respondents came from two pubs, The Anchor and The White Oak. From observations, out of the six pub sites, these two pubs would be described as the less appealing ones to consumers in terms of physical features and heritage.

For example, The White Oak is a building which is representative of a later 20th century pub and so does not have much of an appeal in terms of history or heritage. This is reflected by the interior, which has an open-plan layout, with the exception of a small separate room at the front of the pub. Although not overly-modernised, the pub does not boast the older style features that some of the other pub sites have. The large open-plan room looks more suited for diners as opposed to drinkers. Despite this, the pub is comfortable to sit in and appeared popular with several regulars who would sit at the bar or sit at table playing cards. Instead of a focus on heritage, therefore, The White Oak is marketed as family and community-oriented.

Respondents tended to show an interest in the older features of pubs, as will shortly be discussed. This might explain why the respondents from both The White Oak and The Anchor were not interested in the appeal of physical features of pubs, as they needed to have consonance between their personal choice of pub and what they feel is important within the pub space.
4.4.1 Cleanliness and Hygiene

For the most part, physical features specifically were not an attraction for the respondents in The Anchor and The White Oak. However, a regular at The Anchor, Imran, did put some emphasis on hygiene in pubs:

*Imran*: I like, I do like cleanliness of the pub. I mean for over two years or so, the gents stunk. OK so when you’re in a pub after two pints you have to go and spend a penny so... but you can’t even stand there. They had wired it wrongly, OK it’s been rectified now, but why should that happen?

Imran does not show an interest in the physical features of pubs but feels it is important that the pub is clean. In this case, he describes how the toilets in The Anchor gave off a bad smell for a long period, making it uncomfortable for him to use the toilet. Imran appears to expect that a certain level of hygiene and cleanliness should be kept in pubs. This was not, however, enough to put off Imran from going into this pub. This was not the case for other respondents who would avoid pubs if they were unkempt. Nancy speaks about a trip to Nottingham when she was looking for a pub with a friend:

*Nancy*: My head has gone now, when I went Nottingham with Gail a few years ago. We were looking for a pub for something to eat. We came across quite a few and we were both saying no. It was because it looked un-kempt, grotty, generally there’d be an opening in the door and you’d look at the floor, and if it’s ditched which it can be, that would put you off as well.

*Interviewer*: You want it to be clean?

*Nancy*: Not necessarily plush but I want it to be clean, paintwork on the outside et cetera. I want it to be kempt. Preferably no vomit outside!

The pub exterior offers an opportunity to infer what that interior of the pub is like. If the exterior is not looked after then it gives off a bad first impression of a pub and can deter people, like Nancy, from coming in. It may have been the case that the pubs that Nancy and her friend viewed offered very good food, but the fact the pub gave off a
bad first impression through the exterior put them off going in altogether. A kempt exterior of a pub would appear more likely to draw customers like Nancy inside. This highlights the importance of maintenance of the exterior of pubs for some pub-goers. Pub-goers who perceive a pub building as kempt and presentable may be more encouraged to enter the environment for the first time as it gives a better first impression.

4.4.2 Older physical features and modernisation

Of the respondents who showed more of an interest in the physical features of the pub, all showed a preference for older style pubs and/or older features in pubs. This was certainly the case in comparison to more modern pubs or bars. This is perhaps unsurprising due to the older style features or heritage of four of the pub sites visited. Six respondents specifically used the term ‘olde-worlde’ in describing the type of pub they prefer. Olde-worlde (also oldie-worldie and oldy worldly) features are linked to an imagined European past (Dicks, 1999). Respondents who used the term olde-worlde were all in pubs which boasted historical features, such as beamed ceilings and fireplaces. Although it is clear that olde-worlde features have a link to the past, there is little academic literature on the topic and so the term remains ambiguous. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 5, including its links with authenticity and nostalgia.

Patrick is someone who takes an interest in the heritage of buildings due to the nature of his job. He especially paid attention to the physical features on his first visit to The Red Dragon:

Patrick: I specialise in the restoration of listed buildings. This is the old type of building look, and it just looks... it’s one of those things where you say: I’d love to go in there for a pint. Unfortunately, today’s the first time but I’ve threatened many times to do it. No it’s a fantastic building, looks beautiful.

Interviewer: What in particular?
Patrick: Just the façade, the whole building, old time. Obviously there is a lot of history, which I don’t know but there must be a lot of history to it. I know from coming in here, had a look around had a look at the décor, they’ve geared it up for the old time look.

For Patrick, the exterior of The Red Dragon stands out for him due to the age of the building, something the pub embraces with its Tudor-style exterior. Pubs are spaces which have field-specific cultural capital for the pub-goer. The Red Dragon, for example, gives the pub-goer an idea of what an older pub looks like and so adds to their field-specific cultural capital. By chance Patrick is involved in the restoration of listed buildings; this means he has the general cultural capital himself to interpret the space. Patrick speaks about how the interior and exterior remain consistent with the ‘old time look’ and infers how the pub must carry history with it. Patrick uses his own acquired knowledge and expertise to make this assessment and is sure the building is representative of an age gone by. Another pub-goer may not have possessed the cultural capital involving listed buildings to be able to make this judgement. The assessment made of the building through his own cultural capital contributed to his desire to come to The Red Dragon for the first time. His confidence in the building having a history behind it is the attraction for Patrick.

Like Patrick, Tom also describes having a preference for older features in pubs, whilst also using the term olde-worlde:

Tom: I think lighting has a massive part in drawing you somewhere as well, the colour of the lighting, the coolness and the warmness of it. But the weather as well, in the summer you don’t want to be sat in a olde-worlde warm pub, you want to be out in the garden or that’s when you need to open something up. So if you can have great big opening windows, but it still looks olde-worlde in the winter, because you want to be inside and warm. You’ve got to be able to flip it. I think it depends on the weather in England, that’s what makes it.
Tom uses cultural capital to make a judgement on the aesthetical appeal of The Red Dragon from his past experiences of pubs. In his interview, Tom discusses his history of going to pubs since the age of 14 when he first started to play in a band. This experience of pubs has accumulated toward his field-specific cultural capital, as outlined in chapter 2, of what a pub should look and feel like. He highlights how in his experience the lighting makes an important first impression when choosing a pub to go into. He also emphasises how the milieu needs to match the occasion. Tom has no interest in the attractiveness of an olde-worlde pub during the summer months as he probably will be sat inside. In Tom’s experience a pub should be adaptable to the needs of the environment, whether this is the time of day or the weather. The physical features of a pub are as important aesthetically as they are practically in Tom’s experience.

Michael is another respondent who has a preference for olde-worlde pubs. Michael speaks about why he wouldn’t go into some more modernised bars:

*Michael: I’d say they’re trying to attract a younger audience than me to start off with. I’d say that that kind of place probably wouldn’t serve real ale and if they did it probably wouldn’t be a very nice one. That’s me being judgemental. But if you go the city centre there’s not many razzmatazz kind of silver metal modern bars that you can go in and sit in the corner in a nice warm environment.*

Here Michael makes several presumptions about more modern bars just from viewing the exterior or interior. He displays important interactions between tangible features when making assessment of a drinking space. From the mindfulness of a bar being modern, Michael assumes that a bar would not serve the beer he would like, in this case real ale. Michael is assuming a homology between tangibles from his first impressions. Michael, however, would have no way of knowing this until he entered a bar of this type. Similarly, Michael assumes a bar of this type will not allow him to feel as comfortable as in a pub. Here the perceptions of the tangible décor in a pub interact with the idea of a cosy and warm environment. This is something that Tom also touched upon in describing the merits of being warm and comfortable in a pub.
A first impression given off by the features of a bar or pub can lead to more presumptions about a place, as Nancy displays with her reluctance to go into a pub which looks unkempt from the outside. Due to such interactions between tangibles, physical features of a pub appear to have an important bearing on judgements of a pub space and more importantly, whether one enters it.

### 4.4.3 Rooms

Without prompting from the interviewer, eight of the respondents made reference to the impact of rooms in a pub. Pub buildings offer a huge variation in their spatial layout, whether this is through having numerous rooms or just a single room. It was typical of pubs of the past to have more rooms for different functions. For example, the Mass Observation study (1943) made note of how some larger pubs had several rooms such as a lounge, parlour, tap room and a vault. Although this is obviously not representative of pubs today, it does show how, historically, pubs were buildings with several separate rooms. Pubs have changed over time in terms of typical features and building structure (Ainsworth, 2015). For example, more recently open-plan pubs are much more common.

Several respondents who were long-term pub-goers discussed how the structure of the rooms in pubs had changed. The Montague, however, is an example of a pub which has not changed dramatically over its long history. The pub is one of the oldest in the city, dating back to 1720. Due to the location of the pub being in a city centre, there is little room to expand meaning the pub has retained a more traditional layout. Like some of the other pubs, the heritage of the pub works as an attraction. Inside, The Montague has an older feel due to its layout not being open-plan and instead with olde-worlde features in the winter.
being much more segmented. The pub is relatively small making it cosy throughout, especially in its secluded single booth area known as ‘the cave’. The general décor of The Montague is traditional with the use of stone paving as well as wooden features throughout which give a warm feeling. The pub also has a quirky twist (such as a wall of mirrors) to make it accessible to pub-goers of younger ages as well. This pub does differ from the others in that it feels especially open to anyone who wants to come in and sit anywhere. This is reflected by the especially friendly nature of the staff experienced when visiting this pub.

Arthur, the oldest respondent, has a preference for what he views as the more traditional pub features, especially those features which have remained since he was younger. This makes The Montague the ideal pub for Arthur:

Arthur: In this pub they've kept it the same. It’s a listed building, has gas lighting, it still has character and has its history intact. Knocking down the walls in a pub ruins it, pubs in the past had all kinds of rooms.

Arthur is a keen admirer of the age of The Montague and how it has kept its tradition intact; he makes this clear constantly throughout his interview. When asked about the physical features which make the pub more traditional for him, he speaks about the physical structure of the building not changing. The Montague is an attached building on a street corner and has little room for extension, meaning the pub has remained relatively stable in its structure over its long history. Arthur appreciates the fact the structure of the pub manages to retain this history and character. Arthur is not interested in change; instead he wants the tangible features of the pub to remain static. He displays some nostalgic feelings towards The Montague because it represents a time which is now lost. This shows how the tangible features in pubs have the power to evoke deeper meanings for pub-goers. The importance of nostalgia will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.
Similarly to The Montague, The Hare and Hounds is a pub with aesthetically-appealing heritage- and in fact is located in a listed building. The pub has a partly thatched roof, panelled wooden décor and oak beamed ceilings. The addition of a wood burner and a fireplace give an older feel to the interior and makes the pub cosier. The interior of this pub, however, has changed dramatically over the years. Along with several extensions to the original building, the pub now has an open-plan as opposed to having smaller rooms. This is where the pub is divergent to The Montague and splits the opinions of pub-goers.

The Hare and Hounds is a pub that both Ian and Dan frequent, despite an age gap of about 30 years. Although they both visit the pub, they have different opinions on its more modern open-plan layout:

*Ian:* I went into what I call the old bogey room, I used to go in about 20 years ago, it’s still there, but it’s not there as such, they’ve knocked walls out, knocked too much, the seating is still there but I didn’t like it so much.

*Interviewer:* Why would you say smaller rooms would be better?

*Ian:* I say. I used to go in here, in what I called the bogey room. It was nice and cosy and everybody knew everybody in there. I don’t think I came in here, I only went in the toilet.

In a separate interview, Dan discusses the impact of rooms (or lack of rooms) in the pub:

*Dan:* It is a really nice building, I’ve seen the changes come through over the years, changes that have done for the better. Back in the day it used to be 3 separate rooms, little pool table there, another room there another room there. You wouldn’t even know unless you went for a wander. That was nice back in the day, but opening it out brings everyone together. Yeah you wouldn’t believe.... There’d be a room there, a room there, a room there and you had to actually go physically into it just to know, people wouldn’t know. But opening it up brings everyone together.
Ian discusses a room which used to exist in the pub, the ‘bogey’ room. This would have been the first room encountered when entering through the oldest (or original) part of the pub building. It now makes up a much larger open room, as Ian describes. He feels that the pub has knocked down too many walls in opening the pub space. Ian liked the ‘bogey’ room due to its social and physical benefits. It was comfortable for Ian to sit in and it was a place where customers knew one another. Comparatively, Dan is of the opposite opinion about rooms in the Hare and Hounds. Dan perceived the rooms in the Hare and Hounds to have an isolating effect within the pub. For Dan, the open-plan pub has greater social benefits. By knocking through the physical walls in a pub, a pub also knocks through social walls of sorts. Dan believes the newer open-plan Hare and Hounds to be one where everyone can integrate together.

Ian may feel the closer physical proximity experienced within smaller rooms encourages individuals to interact to one another. This agrees with the findings of Jones et al. (2002), who found pub-goers to bemoan the lack of intimate atmosphere associated with larger Wetherspoons pubs (Wetherspoons often having an open-plan layout). Whereas there is also support for Dan’s idea that an open-plan also has social benefits. The Mass Observation study (1943) found that rooms in the pub can cause some individuals to never see others because they did not stray from their preferred room. This may have been the case with Ian, although he was happy he just knew everyone in the ‘bogey’ room. With an open plan pub, Dan thinks the individuals in the pub mix more rather than sticking to certain rooms. Dan suggests that opening the pub up reverses the said isolation of groups in the pub and encourages everyone to socialise with one another. Although Ian and Dan have differences of opinion on this matter, they both show how the tangible features of a pub have a large bearing on the social benefits of a pub. There is a constant interaction between different tangible elements of the pub space and potential social consequences of these tangibles.

It is likely that age is an important factor in the preferred layout of a pub. Ian, as well as the similarly aged Arthur, is showing a generational field-specific cultural capital as
compared to Dan. Ian is an over 65 and so has experiences of pubs having a series of smaller rooms from when he was younger. Dan is around thirty years younger than Ian and is less likely to be attuned to some of the layouts Ian reminisces about throughout his interview. Instead, Dan may be more used to the more modern open-plan pub and so it is what he expects from a pub. Arthur and Ian are accustomed to rooms from their long history within pub spaces and so will have differing tastes and preferences to Dan.

4.5 Staff

After taking in the physical features of a pub and deciding to enter, the first place a pub-goer is likely to go to is to the bar to buy a drink. If this is the case, the next important tangible encountered in the pub is the staff. Here, the term staff includes anyone under employment of the pub sites visited, or any pub, including the respective licensees. From the responses of pub-goers it was clear that staff play an integral part in the pub experience. This may be through actually drawing people to the pub in general or helping to make informed decisions about which pub an individual should go to. Demonstrating this from the dataset, 17 out of 18 respondents regarded staff as an important factor in their pub experience in one form or another. The single respondent who did not regard staff as important, David, simply stated:

‘Like I say, it doesn’t bother me, I don’t necessarily go somewhere to socialise with the staff.’

Despite this remark, one of the reasons David attends this pub in particular is because he knows one of the licensees, inadvertently suggesting that interacting with the licensee is a reason for himself to go to the pub.

The direct duties of the staff in the pub received little attention in the interviews which may be somewhat surprising. Direct duties such as pulling pints, serving food and
taking part in general transactions were not often raised as important factors in the pub experience. Out of the 18 respondents, only four explicitly put emphasis on good or proper service despite this being the immediate duty of pub staff. This may have been due to a function of the questions asked, as the actual physical service was not specifically probed in the interviews. It could also be the case that these basic staff duties are simply overlooked when performed to expectations. Importantly, this highlighted how respondents viewed the staff to offer much more to the pub experience than just basic service duties.

Three key traits of staff were identified from the dataset and are presented here:

1/ Staff as being welcoming;

2/ Staff as showing care for customers;

3/ Staff repaying customer loyalty and ‘going the extra mile’.

This order represents a logical sequence between staff and their customers. On a first or early visit to the pub, respondents would receive a welcome from staff. If the welcome was good and appreciated, they would likely return and receive ongoing customer care. Ongoing customer care again encourages customers to keep coming to a pub over a longer period. Finally, staff can repay this loyalty with gestures which are again appreciated by the frequent customer. Evidence for each of these themes will be explained in more detail in the discussions which follows.

4.5.1 Staff as welcoming

The first trait of staff frequently perceived as important by respondents was the notion of staff being welcoming. Staff can present themselves as the first point of social contact when an individual enters a pub and so give off an important first impression of the pub for new customers. Oldenburg (1999) makes reference to the attraction to pubs being due to their welcoming nature and human scale. Respondents frequently
stated how important a welcoming pub environment was to them and how staff members play a role in this.

Jane and Nancy normally visit a café when they meet but instead decided to make a rare visit to The Montague. They outline how staff can make you feel more welcomed in the pub space and how they were made to feel on this visit:

*Jane:* I think the more friendly they are the better, they make you feel more relaxed when you’re in a pub don’t they. It’s not just go to the bar for a drink and sit down, they actually chat. They make you feel welcome.

*Nancy:* That seems to have disappeared a bit in certain areas. If you went into a pub near the shopping centre, if you went in there, they’d just want to serve you.

*Jane:* That lady behind the bar she is really nice. They couldn’t do enough for you, they make you feel special. I think the more friendly they are the better, they make you feel more relaxed when you’re in a pub don’t they. It’s not just go to the bar for a drink and sit down, they actually chat.

Jane and Nancy emphasise how important it is to be made to feel welcome when they visit the pub. Despite not being regular pub-goers, in particular to The Montague, Jane and Nancy are made to feel comfortable in a new space because of the welcoming nature of the staff. Similarly, in a hotel setting, Skandrani and Kamoun (2014) found a warm welcome from staff to be one of the most important aspects of hospitality. This is another example of the importance of the first impressions given off by pubs, as described in the physical features section of this chapter. If a welcome is not provided on entry to a pub it is noticed by pub-goers and could deter loyalty toward a pub. Jane goes as far as to describe the engaging nature of pub staff as making her feel special. This is making her pub experience more meaningful, an important part of the pub experience. The meaningful nature of interactions in the pub in terms of authenticity and nostalgia will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.
Arthur, a regular pub-goer for over 50 years, here gives a similar example of how the welcoming nature of staff can encourage the feeling of being comfortable in the pub space:

*Arthur:* Yes, comfortable. Well if you come in and who’s behind the bar says ‘Good Afternoon’ or ‘Good Morning’, it’s nice. They are prepared to say hello to a stranger. They may not be the best looking person but they have that personality which invites conversation. Then when you leave, it would be ‘Thank you’ or ‘Have a Good Morning’.

Arthur emphasises how something as simple as a greeting on entry is enough to make him feel comfortable in his surroundings. The most important thing for Arthur is that a staff member is hospitable, facilitating his pub experience in terms of sociality and comfort. Beyond this, he wants this welcoming hospitality to be consistent across his pub experience. This includes a goodbye when he leaves the pub space. Knowles and Dingle (1996) argue that a consistent welcome and hospitality in the pub space is important in building loyalty from pub-goers, such as Arthur. If Arthur was to feel, for example, that a warm welcome was just to get him to buy a drink and ceased after the monetary exchange, he may be less likely to be loyal toward a pub.

Other respondents also made reference to how they can be put off returning to a pub just because the staff are not as welcoming as they would like. This includes Victor and Anne who speak about how a lack of a welcome on entry to the pub can be enough to put them off for good:

*Anne:* I think you know it’s how they make you feel when you come through that door, if they completely ignore you and go to someone else, my first instinct is to turn around and walk out the door.

*Interviewer:* Hospitality?

*Anne:* This is it.

To Anne, the greeting of staff on entry to a pub is so important to her experience, that without it she would leave a pub before even having bought a drink. This emphasises
how important a welcome is, no matter what other characteristics the pub might possess, this first point of social contact is one of the most important to Anne as she expects hospitality. Pub-goers like Anne are not pre-occupied by the physical features of pubs and so instead can put much more emphasis on the behaviour of staff. A greeting, although simple, can go a long way in encouraging customer loyalty.

4.5.2 Staff as caring

The second recurring theme from the dataset involving staff was customer care. Several respondents made reference to how the staff at their local pub would look after their customer base and come across as caring to them. Where the welcoming nature of staff is important in first or early visits to a pub, staff can also keep encouraging individuals to keep coming to the pub past this point because of their caring attitude towards them. The first common example of care from staff toward customers is through the learning of names. Michael is a regular at The Hare and Hounds and is speaking about a certain staff member:

Michael: They’ve got another guy, a guy called Roger, he’s a very, very good barman. He knows everybody’s name, so you walk down there and he’ll shout over. That makes a big difference; some staff look straight through you.

Michael goes to the Hare and Hounds most days of the week and has become familiar with the staff due to the frequency of his interactions with them. When pub-goers like Michael get addressed by their name by staff it can make them feel special and cared for. The pub environment is able to become more personal and comfortable for pub-goers if they feel like they are known. The importance of staff learning customer names is shown by the fact it is the first thing Michael thinks of when describing Roger as a good barman. Rather than Michael valuing Roger’s ability to pour a good pint or provide efficient service, it is the personal touch added to the service within the pub environment. Staff who are prepared to make an effort by learning customer names show that they have a genuine interest in their customer base.
Customer care can be taken much further, as can be seen in Craig’s account of how caring the staff can be in The Anchor:

Craig: We all worry about people who have not been in in a couple of days, a couple of old ladies come in here. If they’ve not been in, Tim will pop round and go and find out. We like to know they’re alright, you know, it’s caring in that way, very caring.

Tim is a barman who spends most of his time at The Anchor, whether he is working or not. Extending above and beyond getting to know his customers, Tim is prepared to show extreme levels of care. In Craig’s example, Tim’s care extends outside of the pub environment to houses of customers. This demonstrates to everyone at The Anchor, not just these older customers, how caring staff members are prepared to be. Craig is able to view Tim as showing genuine notions of care towards his customer base above and beyond what might be expected. This may not be the case in other pubs and hence is a good reason for Craig to keep going to the Anchor.

In describing a good or best experience he had in a pub, Imran decides to share a personal example of when pub staff were caring toward him:

Imran: People care. I can tell you my one experience. There was one occasion; I was a bit over the top. Over the top in the sense I had a bit too much to drink. The minute I got into the pub, the lady up there didn’t sell me any alcohol, I was that pissed I didn’t know what I was drinking. The next day I arrived I got in there, she says ‘3 cups of coffee, where had you been?’ I said ‘what are you talking about?’ ‘You walked in here yesterday, you were totally… ’. She gave me 3 black cups of coffee which was caring. OK I may have had a good time somewhere else, but it’s caring. People caring for each other.

Interviewer: Customer care?

Imran: Customer care as well as friendship care as well.

In this case, a lady who works in a pub he goes to confronted Imran about how drunk he had been the previous night and told him how she had given him coffee in an attempt to sober him up. This is not something she had to do, but showed that she
was prepared to care for her customers. This was especially caring because Imran had become intoxicated at another establishment and so he had not spent his money at this pub, but this member of staff was still prepared to look after him. He even goes as far as to state that staff can become friends due to their caring nature. The frequent exposure to staff for pub-goers means that they can become more than just the seller in this consumption environment. It is customer care which can contribute to loyalty in pubs.

4.5.3 Staff repaying customer loyalty and going the extra mile

The final recurring theme surrounding staff was repaying customer loyalty. Once a customer fully establishes loyalty to a pub by regularly visiting, it would appear that they are more likely to be thanked through gestures from staff members. There were several instances during the interviews where individuals would make reference to a time when staff had gone out of their way for frequent pub-goers. Although there is obvious overlapping with care in this theme, some examples stood out as licensees and staff were really going the extra mile for their customers. Craig speaks about the licensee at The Anchor:

Craig: Rick does quite a lot of themed things, and they’re very, they are enjoyable, he goes out of his way with what I call 110% work, he puts that extra 10% on top to make sure it’s right and you appreciate it. You look at what he’s done and you don’t just shrug it off, it’s there. We say he’s the 110% man. That’s what he does, he goes the extra mile just to get things right.

Craig speaks very highly of Rick, who has been licensee of The Anchor for over 5 years. Craig does not just notice this, he appreciates it. The lengths that Rick goes to please his customers are not seen as part of a licensee’s normal duties and Craig especially values that. Craig finds others in the pub that share his opinion and terms it ‘going the extra mile’, a phrase also used by Dan when describing the staff at The Hare and Hounds. Rick repays his customers’ loyalty by putting in so much effort to make them happy, something he appears to achieve in Craig’s case.
Michael uses a more specific example to display how the licensees at The Hare and Hounds reward their customer base, through a free music event:

_Michael:_ For me the nice thing about that was there was no mention of any payment, no one trying to try to flog you tickets for it, or anything else, it was something they put on, kind of a thank you. I know it’s to draw people in but I don’t think it was advertised, it was just a nice thing to do. On a Sunday afternoon they do Sunday lunch all day, whatever bits of food... roast potatoes, even bits of meat, which are left over when the restaurant closes they put them out on the bar. It’s the little things like that, TLC.

In this example, Michael does not perceive a music event at The Hare and Hounds as a money-spinning exercise and instead views it as the licensees saying thank you to their customer base for being loyal to them. He saw it as an altruistic act for his own, as well as others, repeated presence at the pub. Similarly, Michael describes how on a Sunday it is common for the staff to give the leftover food to pub-goers instead of throwing it away. Again this is something that the staff do not have to do, but instead is a gesture of goodwill for repeated custom. Michael goes on to refer to TLC (tender, love and care), suggesting that the staff look after their customer base and go out of their way to do this. Licensees, along with their staff, may see the bigger picture of keeping their customer base loyal by rewarding them, as opposed to just trying to make short term financial gains by, for example, charging for a music event.

Rob offers a different type of example of how his loyalty is repaid, through the use of a tab. Rob attends several pubs frequently and is well known, this is especially the case in one pub where he has got to know the licensee well:

_Rob:_ I go to one pub because I know the fella who runs it. I can drink without paying per drink, on a tab, if you know what I mean. It’s convenience, if I go in there and have two pints, I can walk away, go the next day, have 2 pints, walk away, and he won’t, I can pay up at the end of the week, there’s no problem. He knows me and I know him. I’m not gonna do a runner, and he knows me. It’s convenience.
Rob speaks about how the licensee and he know one another and therefore he will always pay the debt of his tab. This is more convenient for Rob and he sees it as an act of trust from the licensee. Rob goes to this pub knowing that he can take advantage of the perk of having a tab, something the licensee does not have to let him do. It means that Rob is more loyal to that pub, safely in the knowledge he does not have to stress about paying what he owes for drinks straight away. Allowing tabs is a risky strategy for licensees as it is very easy for people to avoid paying their debts (Mass Observation, 1943). Despite the risk of losing money, the licensee is showing Rob that he appreciates his custom and repays him for it by allowing Rob to do something which is easier for him.

Although licensees and staff can repay loyalty in different ways, they also have the ability to put individuals off going into a pub by doing the opposite. Later in his interview, Rob describes an instance where he felt his loyalty had not been repaid and this caused him to stop going to a particular managed house:

Rob: I used to drink in a pub, regular, and there were 4 or 5 of us. I know for a fact what money we spent in there and then all of a sudden they revamped the place, we all sort of left, we didn’t go back. They lost a lot of money. There were 5 of us, we all spent 100 pound a week, that’s £500 a week times the year, that’s a lot of money. They then decided to do something and we decided to leave on mass, and it cost them a lot of money.

Interviewer: Why did the revamp put you off?

Rob: It weren’t a revamp. It was... somebody else came in to take it over. A manager came in, just something happened and it weren’t quite right. One afternoon I said I weren’t coming in again. They were selling... of course I drink Carling lager. I went in one afternoon and they said, we’ve ran out of Carling glasses we’ll have to sell you a Carling in just a normal beer glass. Well obviously there’s no widget in the bottom, flat as anything. They kept going and kept going and I thought it can’t be right. Spent all that money... so I said I ain’t coming in again, and the other bloke said well if you ain’t I’m not, and if you aint I’m not. All for revamping it for an evening meal. It didn’t close, but it nearly closed after that. £100 a week easy.
In this case Rob was very aware of the large amount of money he was spending at this pub. Something simple, like the lack of the correct glass, can be enough to put customers like Rob off going to a particular pub. Despite the loyalty Rob and his friends has shown this pub over the years, this was quickly broken when Rob perceived the staff at the pub as not being prepared to go out of their way for the customer. The price of the correct glasses for lager would have been insignificant as compared to the money which would have been gained from Rob and his friend’s continued loyalty. It would appear to be important for pubs to appreciate and repay their customers in certain ways to keep them happy and loyal otherwise they may risk losing custom.

4.6 Clientele

Beyond the potential draw of physical features and staff, another standout tangible for respondents was the clientele in a pub. These are the individuals who could be daily visitors, weekly visitors or even on a first visit to a pub. According to respondents’ accounts, there appeared to be generalisations about what the clientele of certain pubs were like, whether this was positive or negative. For example, the clientele of The Hare and Hounds were repeatedly described as collectively ‘nice’, rather than this being broken down into individual pub-goers. Respondents spoke about how important the clientele were in a pub if they were visiting for the first time, as it would give them a good idea of what a pub is like. This discussion will summarise three themes emerging from respondents’ accounts of clientele in pubs:

1/ factors influencing generalisations about clientele;

2/ clientele as welcoming;

3/ avoiding trouble.
4.6.1 Factors influencing generalisations about clientele

Before discussing what respondents perceived to be attractive and unattractive in terms of the clientele in a pub, there is need for a discussion of the variables influencing clientele. According to some respondents, the general clientele of pubs appear to be as a function of other tangibles. Respondents tended to use these factors, such as beer choice and price, to make generalisations about the type of people in a pub. This appeared to have an influence on pub choice for respondents. Terry is someone who talks about the effect of beer choice on the individuals who regularly go into one pub he has been to:

*Terry:* The other one is The Carp by the bus station. It’s really setback, it has a regular clientele in it. It’s ok, it’s very big on its real ale. I don’t drink it but it’s a nice thing to have because he has beer festivals there.

*Interviewer:* Do you think it says something about it, if it serves real ales?

*Terry:* Probably means they attract an older clientele, maybe a bit more conservative, but maybe that’s a bit of generalisation. I would say the percentage would be a little bit more, I hate stereotyping people but, it’s probably a bit more rugby, and a bit more ... conservative, maybe a bit more countryfied.

Terry discusses the clientele in The Carp, a pub not far from The Montague. From his own experiences of pubs, Terry displays his field-specific cultural capital regarding certain types of clientele in certain types of pubs. Terry has been going into pubs for over 25 years and uses this experience to make judgements on pubs. Terry makes assumptions about who might be in the Carp just from the beer they offer. Similarly to the discussion of Michael’s perception of modern bars, Terry assumes a homology between tangibles within the pub space. Without actually physically being in The Carp, Terry generalises the clientele in there to be older and of a higher socio-economic status because of the beer it serves. Despite admitting to his ‘stereotyping’, Terry is still inclined to think the clientele in that pub are of a certain kind. Contrastingly, throughout his interview, Terry frequently refers to The Montague as being more open and ‘liberal’ where there is no obvious type of clientele. Pub-goers like Terry have the
ability to make generalising judgements on pubs from the perceivable tangibles of the pub space, which could be an important factor in their pub choice.

Respondents also made reference to how prices can shape who goes into a pub. Peter here speaks about how prices can shape pub clientele:

*Peter: Alright they might have music in one room, we don't get drunks, we don't get idiots in. I don't mind if you put an extra 20p on a pint to keep them out, yeah you know.*

Peter is someone who looks to avoid pubs with heavily intoxicated individuals or individuals who might ruin his pub experience. He is prepared to avoid cheaper pubs as he feels this is where this type of clientele is much more likely. Peter believes cheaper prices attract a type of individual who is more likely to disturb others in the pub environment, a sweeping view. Trouble will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Like the beer choice, prices can also affect respondent opinions on the clientele who frequent certain pubs. Patrick also briefly alludes to this, referring to how Wetherspoons is ‘cheap’ and is ‘directed at a certain type of person’, a type of person who Patrick would like to avoid. Perhaps more so than drinks choice, beer and food prices in a pub appear to also lead to generalisations about a pub’s clientele. Pubs appear to have the direct ability to influence their general clientele, or the perception of their general clientele by what they offer to the customer. This is important as it helps to make informed decisions as to which pubs individuals like Peter and Patrick might go to.

Finally, the licensees and/or staff appear to play a direct role in who frequents their pub. In a conversation outside of interviews, one staff member spoke about how when he began his job he had a clear idea of who he did and did not want inside his pub. He knew that having certain individuals in the pub would discourage other customers from coming in. He therefore actively changed the customer base for the good of the pub. Similarly, at The Anchor, the licensee worked hard to change the reputation of
the pub due to its association with troublesome individuals. He actively banned several troublesome customers in order to make the pub more family-oriented and accessible for a wider range of clientele. These two instances give an example of how licensees/staff can influence the clientele who frequent their pubs and create what they believe to be a better image of their pubs.

4.6.2 Clientele as welcoming

General clientele of pubs can act as a draw according to respondents. Like the earlier discussion on staff, clientele have the ability to make a pub welcoming for customers, both new and regular. Respondents were more likely to favour a pub if the clientele already present are prepared to welcome them. The best example to illustrate this is from a new customer on his first visit to The Red Dragon, Patrick:

Patrick: Just people being nice. Obviously coming from Belfast, I have an accent. Sometimes people stand back, they don’t want to get involved in dialogue or conversation. That hasn’t happened here. They’ve been more than happy to have a bit of craic, get into bit of banter, call it what you will.

Patrick is someone with a thick Northern Irish accent, making him distinguishable when he speaks in an English pub environment. He feels that other pub-goers have the potential to be a bit intimidated by his accent and so may avoid conversing with him. From observation, on his visit Patrick chose to sit at the bar, where the regulars of The Red Dragon tend to sit. Despite being a newcomer and sitting amongst the regulars, Patrick felt the clientele were prepared to treat him like a regular. Patrick is interested in what he calls the ‘craic’ in a pub. This is a colloquially Irish term to refer to entertainment, gossip, conversation and fun (Oxford English dictionary, 2015). The welcoming nature of the clientele has in this case prevented Patrick from feeling uncomfortable in a new pub environment and led to him enjoying his first visit. Like staff, regular clientele who are engaging and prepared to make an effort with other customers may make the pub experience a more relaxed one and leave a positive impression.
Craig gives an account of the welcoming nature of clientele from the side of the ‘welcomer’. In this case it is Craig who is being hospitable and welcoming while playing pool at The Anchor:

Craig: Generally there’s quite a lot of things that, that make me want to come again. We play pool on Sundays, there’s just a gang of us of about five or six. All do about two to three hours on a Sunday, play pool against each other, anybody can come join, it’s not just the six of us. Anybody can come join, they’re always made welcome and some of them quite enjoy it cus they might think they’re not gonna get a game cus all those lads are on. But, keep it open and it’s sometimes nice to get.. and you walk away happy then. Say a young girl: ‘oh the lads aren’t gonna let me play’. ‘Get on duck have a go’.

Craig is part of a group of regulars at The Anchor and feels they are approachable. Like the regulars in Patrick’s experience, Craig in this example is being hospitable and welcoming to anyone who wants to play pool. Craig suggests the pub, or at least The Anchor, is a hospitable environment where everyone is welcome. By being hospitable to others, the clientele in The Anchor can encourage customers to not feel intimidated by the regulars and enjoy their pub experience more. Again, this mirrors Patrick who sat in an area normally occupied by the regulars of The Red Dragon. The clientele in pubs have the opportunity to make the space a welcoming and comfortable environment.

4.6.3 Avoiding trouble

While clientele can have the ability to have a positive impact on an individual’s choice of pub, they also have the ability to do the opposite. Orford et al. (2009) found how several drinkers in Birmingham wanted to avoid forms of trouble in the pub space. Similarly, several examples arose from the respondents here where a pub’s clientele put them off going in due to the potential for trouble. What is meant by trouble in this context is aggressive or illegal behaviours in the pub environment, whether this is physical or verbal. Due to the pub being licensed premises, individuals are more likely
to act aggressively as a result of their intake of alcohol (Bushman, 1997). It therefore does not come as a surprise that aggression is something which is commonly associated with pub environments. Craig, someone who has been in what he terms ‘rough’ pubs, speaks about avoiding trouble:

Craig: As I say I can drift around this pub without any problem, other pubs, especially Milton’s bar, stand up with my arms folded, not daring to drink my drink. That’s what I call the one pint pub, go in for one and get out as quick as you can, cus you know the atmosphere. And then, all of the sudden, you think ‘fucking hell’. It’s not trouble I’m after it’s a drink and to maybe talk to one or two people.

Although Craig feels safe in The Anchor, when he goes into certain pubs/bars he is made to feel uncomfortable. Craig shows how pubs can be known for troublesome clientele who can ruin the pub experience. Unlike pubs with welcoming clientele, these establishments leave pub-goers like Craig focusing on safety as opposed to enjoying their time in the pub. Craig instead enjoys going to The Anchor, where trouble has been extinguished due to the aforementioned work of the licensee. In a prolonged example, Jane gives a more specific story of the direct effect of trouble in drinking establishments:

Jane: My son and my brother-in-law popped in for a drink on the way home, my Grandson was with them obviously. All of a sudden a big group of men chased a group of young lads into this pub. They’ve chased these lads into the pub, nobody helped them. They literally beat these young kids up. These loads of people did. Now that’s stuck in my Grandson’s mind, he is petrified of crowds, he is petrified of anybody like that. To me that is a bad experience, especially for my Grandson. He is scared to go in pubs now.

Interviewer: You try and avoid a place where that might happen? You might not expect that here?

Jane: That’s right. They weren’t expecting that there either. There were people sitting around having meals, they’d popped in for a quick drink on the way to the bus stop, bang bang they’re gone. Of course he’s scared now. They won’t go in one on the way home now. They won’t do it now, when they’ve got him with them.
In this lengthy description, Jane describes the events at a pub following a football match. In the example, it is not clear if any of the individuals involved in the trouble had any connection to the pub, but the pub automatically became associated with that violence for Jane, her son and her grandson. The experience of trouble in a pub is enough to deter individuals from going to pubs for good, in this case an adolescent. This is not something which might be expected in, for example, the relaxed environment of The Montague. Trouble has the ability to tarnish the name of pubs, where clientele can become associated with negative assessments. Clientele in pubs are therefore hugely important in making the pub space and inviting and friendly environment free of trouble.

4.7 Summary

Presented here are three key tangibles of the pub space identified from respondents’ accounts. Despite the expected importance of food and drink within the pub space, they were often overlooked and instead there was a general focus on the impact of three broad tangibles: physical features of the pub; staff of the pub and the clientele within a pub.

Firstly, the physical features of a pub building can give important first impressions. Buildings which are adjudged to be unkempt were generally avoided by respondents. Conversely, a pub building which had older characteristics was rated as more attractive by over half of the respondents. This excluded those who went to pubs in less affluent areas, as reflected by their choice of pubs which were less heritage-focused. The ‘olde-worlde’ pub was frequently said to be preferred, which will lead to a more in-depth discussion in chapter 5. The olde-worlde setting appears to be one which is more comfortable to be in as compared to more modern bars which can come across as cold. The actual layout of pubs also received attention. Despite disagreement on whether an open-plan or roomed pub was better, respondents
shared the desired goal of social benefits from the space. This showed the interaction between tangibles of the space and social benefits.

The second key tangible of the pub space was staff. Staff were mainly judged above and beyond their basic duties of service. As one of the first points of social contact within the space, staff can give important first impressions. The type of welcome received by pub-goers on arrival can be integral to their pub experience. When a pub-goers’ loyalty to a specific pub develops, staff show how they can be caring. Staff who genuinely show a caring attitude toward their customers make them feel more comfortable and promote further loyalty. Another factor in consolidating customer loyalty for respondents was when staff ‘go the extra mile’. These are gestures which are out of the ordinary and reward customers. Respondents’ accounts gave the impression that these acts are always remembered and appreciated.

Finally, clientele were identified as the third broad tangible in respondent accounts. Like staff, clientele have the ability to be welcoming towards new pub-goers, something which can again help them to feel more comfortable. Clientele who are open and friendly encourage customers to return to certain establishments. Conversely, pubs which are more associated with trouble tend to be avoided. Witnessing such behaviour is enough to stop people returning to certain establishments and give them negative reputations.

Each of the three tangibles identified here have the ability to interact to help pub-goers feel comfortable and promote loyalty to a pub. These tangibles also interact to help create intangible benefits for the pub-goer. The next chapter will address this idea and discuss how these three tangibles can play an important role in creating feelings of escape through both nostalgia and authenticity.
Chapter 5 Intangible benefits of the pub space

5.1 Introduction

Consumers express both their self and collective identities through consumption (Arnould and Price, 2000). However, consumers are currently faced with a lack of local, traditional and human ties in consumption contexts (Turner, 1987). This limits the ways in which a consumer can express their identity and take part in meaningful experiences. A meaningful context for consumption has the ability to leave consumers feeling ‘enchanted’ (Ritzer, 2007, p.72). Instead, consumers are currently confronted with the fake, the mass-produced and the uniform as a result of the globalised state of the market (Ritzer, 2007). All of these issues can contribute to a general sense of loss and hence can leave consumers with a void which needs to be filled. Escape from these conditions, therefore, brings more meaning to consumers’ lives (Arnould and Price, 2000). This research suggests that the British pub can be one novel space of consumption where this sense of escape can be achieved. The following chapter will begin by reiterating and further applying conceptual ideas of escape, through both authenticity and nostalgia, to the pub space. This informs the following findings section which gives evidence for escape within the pub space using respondents’ accounts. Finally, issues of an escapist approach to the pub experience will be discussed.

5.2 Authenticity, nostalgia and escape

Escapist approaches tend to focus on the idea of finding a perceived difference from the marketing practices consumers face every day (Cutcher, 2008; Lowenthal, 1985; Costa, 1998). The first means of escape discussed in the context of the pub here is authenticity. The authentic offers consumers the chance to experience something real in a world which is dominated by ‘artificiality’ (Belk, 1990, p.671). In order to gain a sense of value and truth in their lives, consumers seek the multi-dimensional nature of
authenticity in consumption contexts. Perceptions of authenticity in an object or experience can be as a result of its perceived spatial-temporal links to the past (Grayson and Martien, 2004). Alternatively, authenticity can be experienced as a result of consumers achieving personal goals, such as connection (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010).

Similarly, nostalgia is another means of escape from the drawbacks of today’s society. By looking back to a more meaningful past, anyone can temporarily escape the uncertainty and sense of loss associated with the fast-moving present (Lowenthal, 1985; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). To escape the uncertainty and isolation that modernisation brings, consumers try to locate relatable ‘social pictures’, ‘social signs’ and ‘social messages’ in order to experience a sense of community (Williams, 1985, p.295). Historical nostalgia is a means of achieving this (Stern, 1992). Historical nostalgia allows consumers to long for idealised notions of the past despite never directly experiencing that past. Often this leads to a yearning for a more humanised past with community links (Turner, 1987). Similarly to Grayson and Martinec’s (2004) concept of authenticity, Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) argue that historical nostalgia can also be based on a spatial-temporal dimension. They suggest that places which have sustained historical and traditional values can offer something nostalgic for the consumer. This research suggests that the pub space can be a spatial-temporal source of nostalgia due to its traditional properties and hence give consumers the chance to experience escape.

Following on from the work of several authors in both the authenticity and nostalgia fields, this research proposes that the pub is one space where escape can be experienced by the consumer. In terms of authenticity, the notions of indexical and iconic authenticity (Grayson and Martinec, 2004) and of connection (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010) will be used in the following discussion. Several of Boyle’s (2003) elements of authenticity will also appear throughout the discussion. The draws of older buildings (Lowenthal, 1985); humanisation of service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001)
and cultural integration (Turner, 1987) will lead the discussion of how nostalgia is also manifested within the pub space.

This chapter will therefore address the existence of sources of authenticity and nostalgia in the pub space, including where these concepts begin to overlap and differ. Using the framework of the tangibles discussed in the previous chapter, this research suggests that there are three key sources of both authenticity and nostalgia in the pub space: physical features, staff and clientele. Evidence presented here will show how these tangibles contribute to a means of escape for the pub-goer. This will draw on several respondents’ accounts of the pub space.

5.3 Olde-worlde, the authentic and the nostalgic

One potential manifestation of both authentic and nostalgic anchors within the pub space is through the physical features of a pub. As described in chapter 4, several of the respondents showed a preference for a pub building with older features. While there are ties between these older features and feelings of escape, firstly the frequently mentioned term ‘olde-worlde’ and its ambiguity need to be discussed.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) defines the term as: ‘Having an old-fashioned or historic character, usually suspected of being spurious or contrived.’ While the first part of this definition is clear and evident, the second half leaves the term ambiguous. The use of the term within pub-goer responses in this research did not infer the olde-worlde as fake. Although an extensive literature search found several mentions of the term in the media and other forms of publication, it failed to reveal a consensus of what the term connotes beyond its definition. When the term has been used, it has been used to describe buildings, often pubs. Olde-worlde was used when describing historical building materials, such as wood and stone (Exeter express & echo, 2002; Barry, 2008); buildings with heritage, tradition or associations with the past (Davies,
2001, p.19) and finally buildings which are associated with the rural or non-urban
(Smith, 2014). This shares some facets with what Turner associates with the need for
nostalgia: ‘the loss of rural simplicity, traditional stability and cultural integration’

The term also has clear associations with previous discussions of the authentic, namely
the traditional nature and the perceived beauty of olde-worlde buildings (Boyle, 2003).
Olde-worlde pubs are also said to bring with them aspects of charm and character
(Knowles and Dingle, 1996). This suggests that an olde-worlde building can add more
meaning to the pub experience. Linking back to escape, consumers are said to want to
attach more meaning to their lives and so an olde-worlde pub has the potential to do
this through both authenticity and nostalgia.

While there were three broad associations with the term olde-worlde, there was also
plenty of divergence surrounding the term. For example, olde-worlde to some people
could have meant hundreds of years olds, while one article referred to artexed walls
from the 1970s as olde-worlde (Hirst ,2011, p.2). This highlights that the use of the
term is ambiguous, as it depends on one’s perception of it. However, the apparent key
feature is that it describes a perceived link to the past, something very distinct from
the present.

One of the pub sites visited, which from observation appears olde-worlde, is The Red
Dragon. The building is said to be from around the 17th century. The pub exterior
retains a Tudor style, with black panelling across a white background, reflecting the
building’s age. The Red Dragon, with The Montague, has one of the most unique
layouts of the sites visited. On entry from the car park, there is an old-fashioned long
corridor with a low ceiling which leads to the bar area. This gives the impression that
the carcass of the pub building has remained the same. The actual bar area of the pub
is small, but extremely cosy, with a small number of tables closely positioned together.
The pub embraces its age with the use of wooden décor and beamed ceilings. Two fires are also in the main room of the pub. Despite having two televisions in the space, this does not appear to disrupt the olde-worlde feeling of the pub. Looking beyond the televisions, it is hard to imagine the furnishings and décor out of place in a distant time gone by. This is a pub which is very much in tune with its heritage, giving an olde-worlde vibe.

The olde-worlde interior of the Red Dragon is as a result of a recent refurbishment which Tom describes. Tom was used as an example of using term olde-worlde in chapter 4 and adds further to what he said here:

Tom: I think that it’s worked, just because I know the lads that work here. It’s nice to see a lot of people who live in the village that haven’t been in here for years. Just because of what you get used to with your jobs and things and previous owners, a lot of people have come back in here and commented on how much they like it just because of... I suppose a lot of it is the wood. Wood is very warm... wood and brick, it’s old-fashioned.

Tom puts an emphasis on how the use of older features in the interior of The Red Dragon has drawn individuals back into the pub. Importantly, from observation, the refurbishment has made the interior of the pub congruent with the exterior, age and history of the pub. This was something which was expressed as a valuable trait in pubs by Clarke et al. (2000). They found that pubs were preferred to have a holistic image and therefore an olde-worlde look for both the exterior and interior may be advantageous.

This does, however, raise the question of how a refurbished pub with a constructed olde-worlde interior can be authentic and attractive to pub-goers. It is here that the framework of Grayson and Martinec (2004) of indexical and iconic authenticity is relevant. As discussed in the literature review, something does not have to be perceived as indexical (perceived as an original) to be authentic for a pub-goer. To be
iconically authentic, however, the interior of a pub must resemble pub-goers’ idealised notion of what an olde-worlde (or the archetypal premodern pub, see Clarke et al. 2000) is. Therefore, for Tom to view The Red Dragon as an authentically iconic representation of an olde-worlde pub, it must match his own notion of what this should look like rather than it necessarily being an authentically original (indexical) olde-worlde pub.

This notion is built from Tom’s field-specific cultural capital surrounding olde-worlde pubs, which has accumulated from his lifelong pub experience. The expected divergence between pub-goers’ own experiences of pubs may explain the variance between individuals’ perceptions of what olde-worlde is. While acknowledged as part of a refurbishment, Tom does not have any issues with the reality of the new décor nor does he interpret it as fake, as the definition of olde-worlde suggests. This may be due to the holistic agreement between the interior and exterior of The Red Dragon. Tom, like other pub-goers at other pubs, perceives The Red Dragon to be an iconically authentic representation of the olde-worlde pub. Pub-goers can therefore demonstrate the spatial-temporal dimension of authenticity through their perceptions of pubs authentically representing a nostalgic pub space from the past. This begins to display the link between authenticity and nostalgia which will be discussed in greater detail toward the end of this chapter. These assessments contribute to feelings of escape within the pub-goer.

Tom’s field-specific cultural capital lends him not only greater familiarity with pub styles but also confidence in comparing and judging them in light of broader aesthetic conventions and criteria. Tom speaks about the importance of wood in the refurbishment of The Red Dragon, which makes it stand out as an olde-worlde setting to him. It was also one of the materials found to be associated with olde-worlde buildings (Exeter Express & Echo, 2002). Wood is a natural building material, with timber framing having an extensive history of use (Streif, 2015). Wood therefore comes across as more natural, simple and traditional as compared to modern
alternatives, all of which are elements of authenticity (Boyle, 2003). Tom is talking about a building feature which is more real for pub-goers and hence can be more attractive. Modernised buildings accessed in everyday life do not offer an experience of some of these elements of authenticity. Perceptions of authentic building materials and décor can therefore lead to feelings of escape for pub-goers.

A pub reflecting its age through its interior, such as The Red Dragon, also allows pub-goers to be nostalgic about a time gone by. They can feel as if they have escaped some of the modern building designs they face on a day-to-day basis by experiencing the olde-worlde pub. The ‘metal modern bars’ described by Michael in chapter 4 are an example of this. Modern buildings, namely some bars, can come across as impersonal, brash and less comfortable as compared to the olde-worlde pub. Clarke et al. (2000) argue that the archetypal premodern pub is one that pub-goers long for through historical nostalgia. This research suggests that this longing for the archetypal pub is due to the merits of experiencing such a pub space, namely gaining feelings of escape through nostalgia. This can drive pub-goers to seek pubs with older and more unique aesthetics. A pub’s older physical features reflect a time gone by for pub-goers and are experienced as a point of difference from spaces faced in the current contemporary climate. Therefore, the experience of nostalgic décor and building materials can add to pub-goers’ intangible feelings of escape, giving the chance to experience more meaningful spaces associated with the past.

Tom’s use of the word warm does not seem to just be indicative of temperature; he appears to suggest that the older tangible building materials contribute to a welcoming and cozy environment. The physical features of a pub appear to contribute to the atmosphere within a pub, something which is discussed in detail in chapter 6. Pub-goers, like the ones Tom talks about returning to the pub, want an inviting environment and hence atmosphere, escaping from the coldness of modern life in the form of warm pub buildings. The pub can therefore offer something tangibly more real to the pub-goer which facilitates intangible benefits such as feelings of escape. The
pub can be divergent from the status quo, leading to perceptions of something more meaningful, authentic and nostalgic.

As previously described, a more consistent pub building, with a congruent interior and exterior, can be more attractive to the pub-goer. Stacey is one pub-goer who expresses this, stating: ‘It’s a listed building I think, so the inside should mirror the outside’. Stacey, the youngest of the respondents shows that it is not just older pub-goers who find the olde-worlde attractive. Stacey does, however, draw a line with how authentic or real the tangible physical features of a pub should be:

*Stacey:* Sort of like... Making a feature of the fireplace without it being dusty and actually really realistic. You know like an old fireplace would have coals and it would be a bit dirty. They do it in a clean way without it being too modern. If they bunged a glass and aluminium thing there it just wouldn’t be same.

*Interviewer:* Right ok, so, they kind of take care of the traditional stuff?

*Stacey:* But don’t take it too far.

In line with the discussion above, Stacey does not like the potential modern nature of pub features, expressing discontent at the idea of modern materials being used on a feature like a fireplace. Stacey wants a more traditional looking fireplace. Lowenthal (1985) argues that with age a building gains more; the aging physical features of a building reflect its history and hence become more meaningful as cues of nostalgic feelings.

Although this may be true of certain nostalgic tourist destinations, it does not come without limits within the pub space. Despite Stacey wanting a nostalgic fireplace she does not necessarily want an authentic one. First and foremost the pub is a drinking establishment within which individuals reside for hours at a time. An authentic coal or wood fireplace, for Stacey, would be too dirty and untidy. This creates a conflict and requires a balance. The authentic feature of the fireplace, for Stacey at least, needs to
remain presentable while also retaining its nostalgic appeal. As discussed in chapter 4, an unhygienic and unkempt pub can be unattractive to the pub-goer and harm the hospitable nature of the space. So in this case, Stacey does not want the authentic fireplace (which to her is dirty) but she does want it to be a nostalgic reflection of the past. This is evidence of how authenticity and nostalgia can become separate for pub-goers in their pursuit of escape. The two means of escape, although linked, are not completely contingent on one another. This will be discussed in greater detail towards the end of this chapter.

Respondents frequently made reference to the story of the pubs they had been to. The exterior and interior décor of a pub can reflect a pub’s history and emphasise uniqueness surrounding the story of a pub. Jane and Nancy are avid ghost hunters and this was partly the reason they were visiting The Montague:

*Jane*: Yeah this one is, because it’s quite old this one is. Yeah the history of this one is... I can’t remember the date it dates back to. But they used to bring the ladies here, and keep them in the cellar, the day before they were to be hung on Gallowtree Gate.

*Interviewer*: Is that what actually happened?

*Jane*: Yeah! You’ve also got, apparently there’s a ghost of a Victorian lady, a little boy and there’s a man as well. I’m not sure what they are. But they used to bring them here first, give them a last meal I think it was and a last drink and then onto Gallowtree Gate.

*Interviewer*: Do you know all this from stories or have you researched it?

*Jane*: This is on the web. It tells you on the thing as well outside.

Jane and Nancy later continue:

*Jane*: I like the old pubs. I don’t like when they’ve tried to change them too much because that takes the character away. This one they’ve kept quite good. I don’t think they’ve changed a lot of it.
Nancy: If they did, they’d ruin the ambience a bit and because of what it stands for. It’s a known fact of how old it is, it’s got history and that it’s haunted.

Jane describes why going to The Montague is a unique experience for the pub-goer. Older pubs, like The Montague, have a heritage which stands out against newer pubs and bars. When a newer pub is built or refurbished, even when it is constructed as olde-worlde, it struggles to live up to pubs with attached heritage like The Montague. As Jane outlines, the pub has a real history and hence a sense of individuality. The building was once used to cater for women who were to be hanged and now as a result of this is haunted. Informative plaques on the exterior of the pub outline this history, capturing the imagination of the pub-goer and reinforcing the authenticity of the pub’s history as well as keeping The Montague rooted in tradition (Boyle, 2003). By sitting in a pub which retains tradition, pub-goers can have a perceived nostalgic association with the past. A pub-goer can envisage a time which is not now and is nostalgically distinct from today’s society with its attached lack of meaning. This would explain the said popularity of ghost nights which Jane has hosted at The Montague, something she also discusses in her interview. Pubs with longer histories, which have not over-modernised their layout, offer unique spaces for pub-goers to have meaningful experiences of both the authentic and the nostalgic.

While the history of a pub like The Montague cannot change, the exterior and interior physical features of a pub can. Jane, as well as Terry in his interview, talks about how The Montague has not changed a lot over its history. By retaining the tangible anchors of the older physical features of the pub, both inside and outside, the history and story of the pub are facilitated. The story of a pub may struggle to be authentic for the pub-goer when the physical features of the building contrast it. Much like the findings of Clarke et al. (2000), Jane emphasises the need for a consistent feeling to the pub. However, Jane does not speak about the need for consistency in physical features; instead she wants a consistency between physical features and the history of a pub. Removing the older physical features of the pub harms the character, ambience, and perhaps most importantly the authenticity of the story of the pub. Much the same,
removal of the history and story of a pub, this research suggests, would negate the opportunity for nostalgic feelings and experiences of authenticity through a pub’s physical features. A consonance between the pub building and the pub’s history gives a stronger means of the intangible benefit of escape through both authenticity and nostalgia. Disrupting the balance between the aesthetical nature of the pub and its heritage can have negative impacts on the perceptions of pub-goers.

This discussion raises the question of how some newer pubs, or pubs with less perceived heritage, promote both authenticity and nostalgia if not through the use of olde-worlde or more traditional pub features. Incidentally, the pub sites visited of this nature were those in lower socio-economic areas. It is within pubs in these areas which pub-goers tend to focus more on the importance of staff and clientele rather than physical features. Staff and clientele offer an alternative means of escape through social contact within the pub space. This was reflected repeatedly in respondent accounts.

**5.4 Staff as authentic and nostalgic**

Another potential authentic and nostalgic anchor for the pub-goer found in this research was the pub staff and their service. The current consumer climate entails the penetration of mass consumption into social life (Arnould and Price, 2000). Customer service, therefore, is an extremely important process for consumers as it is placed firmly in-between production and consumption (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). Like the mass production of products, large companies have applied similar philosophies to customer service, with a focus on efficiency (Ritzer, 2007). This has negative connotations for the consumer leading to a need for escape and so a longing for a more nostalgic and authentic service; something this research proposes the pub can provide.
Service within the current consumer climate is typified by examples of both ‘McDonaldised’ and system-oriented methods of service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). While these modes of service are efficient, because of the use of time and cost-cutting strategies, they may not meet the needs of the consumer. Neighbourly service, conversely, is a type of service typified by human contact. This service is mainly reserved for the elite or high-paying consumer in today’s markets (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). However, this research suggests that the pub can be an exception to this rule. The pub is a space where the consumer can experience natural human contact with staff. This type of service exchange can be perceived as both more real and as representative of a nostalgic time gone by (Ritzer, 2007). The following discussion will therefore show how the pub’s neighbourly (person-oriented) service is a means for experiencing both nostalgia and authenticity and hence escape.

Pub-goers gave examples of several different ways in which staff can come across as authentic in the pub space. Patrick here discusses his early impressions of the staff on his first visit to The Red Dragon, where the kitchen was closed for the day:

Patrick: Oh first class, first class. You know I come in this morning, the girl said to me are you looking for food? I said no I’m looking for a cure, I’m dying, I had to take people out last night and I’m absolutely dying. And she said that’s okay because there’s no food on. To be honest, if you were an astute business person, you would have served the drink and then told them about the food. Whereas these people said, I’ve heard it several times today. You know, you’re looking for food, the kitchens closed, blah blah. Other people could have served them a drink and by the way the kitchen’s closed, which they didn’t do, which I thought was very impressive. They’ve explained the situation before I’ve even started.

Patrick here makes a clear distinction between businesses which are more money-oriented and those which are more customer-oriented. To Patrick, the staff at the Red Dragon instantly showed that they were more concerned with customer care than monetary gain. The description of a ‘more astute business person’ is broadly representative of the current consumer climate, and so, this passage differentiates the pub staff from this trend.
Beyond giving a very good first impression, this is an example of when tangible staff members portray two of Boyle’s (2003) elements of authenticity. A neighbourly service, as touched upon above, is an example of pub service being both unspun and honest, especially as compared to a more ‘McDonalised’ service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). The focus of the current consumer climate is on efficiency: making as much money in as short a space of time as possible. Consumers find themselves frustrated with the amount of advertisements and dishonest money-spinning exercises experienced in their everyday lives (Boyle, 2003). Patrick’s experience above showed him that the staff at the Red Dragon are not this way inclined and are therefore more authentic. The staff showed him something different from the status quo, a customer service benefitting the customer rather than the seller. Patrick expressed how this was out of the ordinary and impressive. The potential unspun and honest nature of pub staff can give a sense of something real and beyond expectation. This accumulates to feelings of escape from the frustrations of the contemporary consumer climate.

Terry shows another way in which service can come across as authentic. In his description of the staff in a pub, he talks about how staff perform under the supervision of their licensee:

_Terry:_ I notice it. I think it is probably because I have been in a situation where I deal with customers myself; you have to know the way to do these sorts of things. There are a lot of pubs where you might just be concentrating on the locals where you and your staff don’t give off a good impression. I think he notices that. I think he is fairly strong on his staff as well. They’re brilliant anyway, you know, they’re not just doing it because he’s told them to.

Interviewer: Genuine?

_Terry:_ Yes genuine, yes.

Terry describes how the staff in this particular pub come across as genuinely customer-oriented and do not just act like this because they are told to. Again, this directly contrasts a more ‘McDonalised’ service which is expected to follow and stick to a corporate script and hence be much more forced. Terry is showing how staff can
come across as natural, another element of authenticity (Boyle, 2003). When staff appear more genuine, they give a better impression for customers like Terry because they are showing something authentic, a real side to them. Pub staff can distinguish themselves from today’s common forms of service by offering something more, something natural.

The genuine and friendly nature of staff is something which is representative of neighbourly service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). It is therefore also illustrative of idealised notions of service methods of the past. This is reminiscent to the types of service used in Cutcher’s (2008) case study of a community bank. Cutcher found that the ‘community bank model’ adopted by an Australian bank allowed customer-staff relations to be perceived as something more than just a business relationship. Instead, both customers and staff members could experience a genuine social relationship which in turn gave a sense of community for customers. More personal service interactions were more common in the past, hence why neighbourly service can act as an anchor of historical nostalgia (Ritzer, 2007).

This research suggests that that staff in the pub, similarly to the staff in Cutcher’s (2008) case study, attend to a sense of loss in consumers by offering a neighbourly service. However, a licensee’s or staff-member’s implementation of neighbourly service has a greater focus on creating a healthy and welcoming environment for pub-goers as the space is used as a hospitality space, something the bank is not. In spite of the probable reason for such behaviour also being an increase in profits, the customer-oriented actions of pub staff can, like the bank, be an anchor for nostalgia. Nostalgic modes of service within the pub space, namely neighbourly service, can therefore contribute to a feeling of escape.

One pub in which respondents were especially focused on the performance of staff was The Anchor. This pub does not have a long history or heritage, explaining why
respondents chose to put more weight on the importance of staff and clientele. The Anchor is marketed as being a family pub by the licensee, with a large play area for children outside, including a bouncy castle. The general décor of the pub is relatively basic, differing from the other pubs. This does not, however, make the pub boring to look at. There are several random decorations around the pub giving it a unique feel. For example, there are novelty life-sized figurines of famous individuals scattered around the pub. This pub is pushed as a place to have fun, with a real focus on themed nights for pub-goers. Despite the random nature of the interior, from observation, the pub appears to work for those who go regularly go to it. There is a seemingly close-knit community in the pub, which includes both the staff and the licensee.

Craig here speaks positively about the consistency of the staff in The Anchor, a much more important part of his pub experience than physical features. He describes the final element of authenticity conveyed by pub staff from respondent accounts:

*Craig:* Generally they are very very good. They recognise what a lot of drinkers, they recognise the regular and that makes a big difference. And it’s not towards the point where I could just walk through the door and there’s 50 people in here and get served, that’s not in, I’ll wait like everybody cus I’m like that anyway. When you get there it’s, you get the same welcome even if they’re rushed off their tiny little feet. And they use first name basis, in my case, two or three every time I walk in, call me Pickles, but they all have their ways.

*Interviewer:* So it’s quite personal with them in greeting?

*Craig:* Yeah, and it makes you feel, you know... Little Tim, who is on tonight... I’ll come in and it’ll be ‘Monsieur Pickles’ and I’ll just go ‘Little Tim’, and it’s not forgotten, it just makes you feel a lot better. Sitting back from a day’s work, you know, you get that sort of atmosphere; you don’t just stop for one, you stop for two or three.

This example, as well as several others, shows how pub staff can offer a service which is very much human, another element of authenticity (Boyle, 2003). Although on the face of it customer service in general is mostly an interaction with another human, the process has become dehumanised through corporate scripts and system-oriented
service (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). These types of service are monotonous and try to remove any human elements in favour of efficiency. Above, Craig states how all the staff at The Anchor offer something different and deal with customers in differing ways. If something is human, it has to be diverse; no two people can be the same (Boyle, 2003). In this way the service exchange in pubs is kept fresh and most importantly more human for Craig.

Craig also speaks about Tim, a staff member with whom he has a running joke regarding the nicknames they give one another. As above, the staff in The Anchor are allowed to express their personalities and hence their emotional labour is not overly scripted and managed in a top-down fashion (Hochschild, 1983). While Hochschild (1983) discusses the benefits of displays of emotional labour for staff, this example shows how emotional labour benefits pub-goers as well. It allows rapport to be built, like in the above example, giving more meaningful social interactions within the pub space. This is another way in which the service interaction in pubs can come across as something real. Pub staff who are allowed to show job autonomy are showing their real selves instead of following a script, making interactions more authentic.

Emotional labour also offers something potentially nostalgic for pub-goers. Idealised notions of the service sector in the past focus on the more personal and interactive nature of service (Ritzer, 2007; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). When pub staff display emotional labour, therefore, pub-goers can resultantly experience a neighbourly service with nostalgic links to the past. Pub-goers, like Craig, can enjoy nostalgic and authentic elements of service which allow a display of personality and use it as a means of escape.

This discussion of authenticity and nostalgia does not come without its exceptions within the pub space. Staff working in all pubs across the country cannot be generalised to be anchors of authenticity and nostalgia in the ways described above.
For example, staff behaviour in some chain pubs, theme bars or pub-restaurants may be more characteristic of mass-marketing companies (Clarke et al. 2000). Staff in managed houses may be more likely to follow a corporate script and hence use a more ‘McDonalised’ service. Representative of this, Jones et al. (2002) found some pub-goers to bemoan the impersonal and clinical nature of staff in a Wetherspoons pub. Alternatively, staff in free-houses or tenanted pubs may also not provide the person-oriented or neighbourly customer service pub-goers may crave for. Respondents within this research spoke negatively of staff who were rude or not prepared to be welcoming. For example, Stacey remarks that the worst experiences she has in pubs are when staff are rude. While staff have the ability to be an anchor of authenticity and nostalgia, they also have the ability to break a sense of escape for the pub-goer.

While it is important to acknowledge these drawbacks of the evidence presented, either way there is an obvious impetus put on customer service performance within the pub space. Positive or negative experiences of staff can leave a lasting impression on the pub-goer. This research is of the opinion that service given in an authentic nature by staff, and hence which is representative of a nostalgic time, is one that is preferred by most pub-goers. The next section of this chapter describes the final authentic and nostalgic anchor within the pub space which can play an as important role in the pub experience as staff, a pub’s clientele.

5.5 Clientele as authentic and nostalgic

Nostalgically, the past can give an individual the perception of a time with greater ‘cultural integration’ (Turner, 1987, p. 152). As a result of the contemporary consumer climate, individuals can be left feeling like a small part of a mass society characterised by the aforementioned dehumanisation and a lack of local and traditional ties (Cutcher, 2008). Consumers are resultantly left to long for a more simple premodern society which was built upon meaningful values, stability and one which included a
greater sense of community (Suttles, 1972; Turner, 1987). The consumer may therefore yearn for the archetypal rural and traditional village community, built upon high standards of social integration. This was once the norm for most, but mass urbanisation is said to have left society with a sense of loss, especially in the context of sociality (Watson and Wells, 2005). This idealised notion of a rural community suggests that a village group convenes in social hubs such as the church, the post office and the pub (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). The pub is, therefore, traditionally a site for close-knit communities to convene, something individuals are said to yearn for in the current consumer climate.

Much like the humanised nature of neighbourly service in the pub space, this research suggests that other pub-goers can be potential anchors of both nostalgic values as well as authenticity. The tangible clientele of a pub can offer respite from the sense of loss attributed to the current consumer climate. They can allow the pub-goer to experience intangible nostalgic feelings, giving a sense of community and togetherness. Instead of just being a ‘cog’ in the capitalist nature of mass society, pub-goers can have a sense of belonging to a locally-tied social group in the form of the pub space. This research suggests the tangible clientele of the pub can be used as an effective nostalgic anchor as they can encourage ‘genuine social relationships’ (Turner, 1987, p.152). This is something which is not always present for consumers (Cutcher, 2008).

In terms of authenticity, the clientele in a pub can contribute in two ways. Firstly, the clientele in the pub can offer pub-goers the chance to experience real social interactions and so the feeling of being part of something meaningful. This mirrors the authentic nature of staff discussed above. Secondly, clientele also give pub-goers the opportunity to achieve connection, one of the personal goals implicated in experiencing authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). The following evidence shows how the clientele in the pub space offer the chance to experience authentic
social interactions and authentic community tradition; something an individual can be nostalgic about.

The first example of clientele being an important form of social interaction and community comes from Imran. Imran, as described in chapter 4, is someone who does not care for the physical features of pubs, at least in terms of olde-worlde. He goes to pubs in a lower socio-economic area and puts more weight on, as well as staff, the importance of other pub-goers:

_Imran:_ It’s usually meeting friends and having a chat. But people come to the pub for a bit of company; the old English ethos was for people to meet at a place and even the community.

Imran continues:

Coming out meeting friends is good. Have a laugh joke, pull each other’s leg, debate current affairs. My interest is sort of politics, current affairs, economics, things like that.

_Interviewer:_ So you’re coming in for the people?

_Imran:_ People, friendship, discussion, things like that.

First and foremost, the pub is a space for Imran to associate with other individuals. Far and beyond being just a licensed premises, the pub offers Imran the opportunity to experience sociality in a simple and hence authentic form. Just through conversations, jokes and debates Imran can experience something which may not be common to him outside of the pub. The pub breaks down the complicated nature of the current consumer climate and lets Imran experience authenticity through something more simple, human and natural (Boyle, 2003).

Imran mirrors the discussion above with regards to a nostalgia for community which was once regularly associated with everyday life. Imran’s use of the phrase ‘old English ethos’ gives an impression of the traditional nature of social interaction and
community within the context of the pub. The pub can therefore retain a traditional and hence authentic social web for pub-goers which may have been lost in mainstream society (Boyle, 2003).

Imran’s use of the term community was not a one-off; several pub-goers agreed that a community existed in their respective pubs. This can give pub-goers, such as Imran, a sense of belonging to something which is nostalgically rooted (Cutcher, 2008). The lack of community and interpersonal relations present in today's society leaves a void which the community in pubs can fill (Putnam, 2000). This fulfils a nostalgic longing for a more stable and humanised yesterday far away from the impersonal nature of the current consumer climate. A pub’s clientele can offer an individual a means of experiencing nostalgic characteristics of the past in the present, contributing to feelings of escape.

While there is an essence of community surrounding pubs, this does not necessarily deny the new pub-goer the chance to experience sociality in the pub setting. Re-using an example of welcoming clientele from chapter 4, Patrick spoke to some of the regulars at The Red Dragon on his first visit:

Patrick: They’ve been more than happy to have a bit of craic, get into bit of banter, call it what you will.

Despite being alien to this particular pub space, Patrick was still able to experience human interaction through banter with the locals who sit at the bar. Even though Imran was a regular at his pub and Patrick on his first visit, they were both able to experience similar social benefits. This is where a pub can differ from modern day equivalents. Taking the example of a fast-food chain restaurant, individuals may frequent the space as much as a regular at a pub. However, rarely will you find an individual who feels comfortable conversing with people they have never met in that setting. On the face it, the friendliness of the clientele in a pub seems out of place in today’s society but it is part of the tradition of the pub space (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). This is why the clientele in the pub space are a nostalgic anchor, as they
behave in a way which is representative of a time which is not now. This does, however, present a paradox. In positively whitewashing the past, what one may long for in the past is not in the past at all, but is instead available in the present, at least in the pub.

Tom is another pub-goer who perceives the pub as a place to convene with other individuals. While respondents made reference to associating with other pub-goers who had similar interests to them, more pub-goers put weight on meeting different types of individuals:

Tom: It’s nice to come in and talk to different generations of people. When you get older folks that drink in the same pub as younger folks, there’s different opinions which have come from different eras and different walks of life that cross and educate over a beer.

Tom here discusses the possibility of meeting individuals from a diverse array of backgrounds within the pub space. Tom speaks about how the pub can break down the barriers faced between different individuals in today’s society. In this case, the pub space plugs a generational gap between pub-goers and allows them to connect with one another. The clientele in the pub space can be used by individuals like Imran, Patrick and Tom, to achieve the personal goal of connection in order to experience an authentic community tradition (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Arnould and Price, 2000).

While connection allows individuals to experience social interaction and personal enrichment, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) also argue that this is contributed to by being proximate to like-minded others. The responses of pub-goers here suggest that the benefits of connection can also follow from meeting different types of individuals in the context of the pub. Again the pub space, through its clientele, can allow individuals to experience something which might not be possible in the outside world (Cutcher, 2008). The current impersonal nature of society makes it difficult to connect
to others, especially different others. Similarly to the example of the archetypal rural 
village touched upon above, the pub can act as a hub to bring together a cosmopolitan 
group. Although a pub can attract a diverse clientele, they all have one thing in 
common; they share a pub space within which they can connect with one another. 
This accumulates as feelings of escape through experiences of authentic and nostalgic 
values.

As the oldest respondent, Arthur probably has the longest memory of pubs. He is 
especially nostalgic throughout his interview, this includes when it comes to clientele 
in a pub:

*Interviewer:* You mentioned the people make it traditional as well, how do they do 
that?

*Arthur:* In the pub you used to get some real characters. You could have conversation 
with them, a laugh and a joke. You’d get eccentric people as well, they were harmless.

The interview later continues:

*Interviewer:* Why might you choose to drink at the pub over home?

*Arthur:* Well I don’t really like drinking at home much. Beer is better to enjoy at a pub, 
not really through quality, it just is. It is a dying breed who just drink for social reasons.

Arthur makes the link of an authentic element, tradition, with the clientele in a pub 
(Boyle, 2003). In his view, the tangible clientele are very much an important part of the 
pub experience. Again, Arthur makes reference to the opportunity of meeting 
different types of people in the pub. To him, the pub is predominately a social activity 
whereby a pub-goer can interact and hence connect with other people. However, 
Arthur relates the benefits of connection with others to a nostalgic time and hence a 
time in the past.

Arthur speaks in the past tense and then later alludes to the pub being different now 
in terms of clientele. Instead of displaying historical nostalgia, the theme of this
chapter, Arthur here shows personal nostalgia. Arthur’s long experience of pubs means that he has seen change in pubs and hence longs for his past personal experiences of the space. Arthur looks back nostalgically to when he enjoyed the sociality of the space more, to the detriment of his view of the present. This shows evidence for Watson and Well’s (2005) idea that nostalgia can inhibit views of the present. In this sense, Arthur’s use of personal nostalgia acts as a negative emotion rather than a positive one. Arthur does still, however, regularly visit the pub despite his slight negativity toward it in the present day in comparison to the past. This shows that personal nostalgia can be a negative emotion for pub-goers, unlike the positive escapist experiences associated with anchors of historical nostalgia within the pub space.

5.6 Problems of escape

Presented above are two methods of escape within the pub space: via authenticity, and via nostalgia. Both authenticity and nostalgia can contribute to a pub-goer’s sense of escape through the experience of the three key tangibles of the pub space. The suggestion that the pub experience is a means of escape does not come without its flaws however. While this research suggests that the pub can be used a means of escape, it does not suggest that this is a straightforward and consistent benefit of the pub space. Escape is tentative and relies on consistency and balance within the pub space. The following discussion highlights the potential problems with an escapist approach to the pub space.

Firstly, the relationship between authenticity and nostalgia will be discussed. This includes a discussion of how pub-goers can separate the two means of escape in their assessments of the space. Secondly, the temporary nature of escape will be put forward, including a discussion of how easily the feeling of escape can be broken.
Finally, this research will question whether escape from the contemporary climate is something the consumer always needs.

5.6.1 Authenticity is not equal to nostalgia

The manifestations of both authenticity and nostalgia within the pub space presented above suggest that the two means of escape are very closely associated. Yet, there is a lack of definitive research into the relationship between historical nostalgia and experiencing authenticity. Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) do, however, suggest that authenticity may be a pre-requisite for historical nostalgia. Conversely, a different link between the two is put forward here.

This research suggests that the past is often perceived as having more anchors of authenticity than today. Therefore, anchors of historical nostalgia in the pub space are also often perceived as authentic. For example, as discussed above, olde-worlde features of pubs, and hence features relating to an idealised notion of pubs of the past, may also be perceived as more authentic. This is due to the association of olde-worlde buildings with more natural building materials such as wood, as compared to more modern buildings. This example echoes the overlapping nature of the two means of escape throughout the above discussion.

However, from respondent accounts, perceptions of both authenticity and nostalgia do not always need to coincide to contribute to feelings of escape within the pub space. Consider, for example, Stacey’s perception of fireplaces. Stacey admires the nostalgic element of fireplaces in pubs due to their links with the past. She does not however want the drawbacks which come with an authentic fireplace. In this case, the dirt associated with a more realistic fireplace would impact negatively on the hygiene of the space. It is not just Stacey who showed a longing for the nostalgic without the
authentic. Two more examples, which are shown in passages regarding perceptions of staff and clientele, come from other pub-goers.

Terry here talks about customer relationships with staff:

_Terry:_ I always think it’s important there is a slight... even though there’s a great deal of friendliness there between bar staff and customers, there has to be a certain amount of distance so it doesn’t get too friendly. People don’t start taking the mickey and everything, because if you did you’d say well why can’t everybody get away with it?

In this case Terry displays the need for the friendly nature of staff, something consumers are nostalgic about (Ritzer, 2007). For Terry, however, when the nature of this relationship with staff is more authentic it is also more exclusionary. Terry wants staff-customer relationships to be informal, less personal and with little obligation in order to fulfil his need for escape. The more superficial staff-customer relationships Terry prefers are therefore an anchor of escape from the other more ‘authentic’ relationships experienced at work and home. When this is not the case and Terry experiences exclusion, the pub no longer adheres to Oldenburg’s notion of it being a third space. The pub needs to be a space where everyone is on a level playing field for it to be differential from work and home (Oldenburg, 1999). When the pub fails to adhere to this, like in the above example, intangible feelings of escape are disrupted. Terry therefore wants to experience nostalgic friendly service over the exclusionary nature of ‘authentic’ relationships with staff within the pub space.

Finally, in a similar example, Victor and Anne talk about a sense of community within the pub space:

_Interviewer:_ Do you think if you come to a pub more and more you become part of a pub community?

_Victor:_ I think you do get sucked into that. Yeah. Sometimes it’s not a good thing because you get involved in things you don’t want to be involved with. You do.
Anne: It’s always best to keep things on an even level, you’re not too over in their pockets and they’re not into yours.

Interviewer: Friendly enough to converse but not too much?

Victor: That’s right, that’s right.

The past is associated with an idealised sense of community as well as greater cultural integration (Turner, 1987). In their responses, therefore, Victor and Anne enjoy the nostalgic sense of sociality gained from the space but do not want the complications associated with more ‘authentic’ relationships. Victor and Anne show that they are wary of having deeper relationships with other pub-goers which will in turn carry more obligations, more akin to friendships in the outside world. Victor and Anne do however want the surface social aspects with other pub-goers, such as simple interactions and banter. As Oldenburg (1999) posits, third spaces should not have any obligations. Once relationships with other pub-goers become more ‘authentic’, Victor and Anne would be obligated to invest more time, commitment and effort into these relationships and hence the pub community. This disrupts their feelings of escape, as they no longer avoid the demands of relationships in the outside world.

The examples of both Terry and Victor and Anne, show how the pub only retains its escapist draws while it remains a third space and hence a setting which is of difference to the outside world (in these cases through a lack of exclusion and obligations). All three examples show how nostalgic means of escape can be yearned for outside of a longing for authenticity. These examples have therefore demonstrated how notions authenticity and nostalgia can be separated across different tangibles of the pub space.

While nostalgia was sought outside of authenticity, this research could not find any evidence for wanting to experience the opposite. Pub-goer responses did not reveal a time where the real was sought but it did not have tied nostalgic principles. This directly opposes the findings of Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) who could not find farm-related
images which were classified as nostalgic without also being authentic. This research suggests that authenticity can be separated from nostalgia in the pub space despite it not being revealed here. The nostalgic nature of the pub makes this difficult to locate, however.

### 5.6.2 Escape is temporary and temperamental

Despite the appeal of escape within the pub space, it is not possible for pub-goers to experience this permanently. Eventually pub-goers must leave the space and return to their lives outside of the pub. This perhaps also means a return to the negativity attached to the current consumer climate. This research suggests the benefits for the consumer gained from the pub space are more akin to escapism rather than escape. Escape is a permanent solution in avoiding one’s problems, whereas escapism refers to a temporary resolution to one’s problems (Calleja, 2010). Escapism therefore requires returning to what one was escaping from in the first place. The pub is only a form of escapism while it is open and while the pub-goer is present. Therefore, the alleviation of the contemporary conditions from consumers through escapism, which can be experienced within the pub space, can only offer short-lived respite.

Additionally, it is impossible for pubs to offer spaces of permanent escape because, in doing so, they would undermine the juxtaposition on which their social significance rests. Let’s take the hypothetical example of a pub open at all times on all days of the week: it offers the potential for permanent escape. In this example it will be also presumed there is a lack of professional and family commitments which need attending to outside of the pub. Once an individual immerses him/herself in an escapist space so frequently, like a pub, they no longer experience a positive comparison to the rest of their life. The pub experience suddenly becomes something very ordinary. The pub being a space of escape is dependent on difference from the everyday. Escape is therefore only beneficial when there is something to escape from,
which in this case is the negativity associated with the contemporary consumer climate (Arnould and Price, 2000; Cutcher, 2008; Grayson and Martinec, 2004).

Escape is also a façade which can be easily shattered. This is especially evident within the pub space. One rude staff member or an adverse glare from a local is enough to disrupt one’s notion of escape. Neighbourly service is a type of service which is more likely to be built on trust (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). This may especially be the case for a regular who repeatedly has contact with the same staff. This makes the service appear more human and hence authentic as compared to the other service alternatives in the current consumer climate, as well as being more representative of the service associated with a time gone by (Cutcher, 2008; Boyle, 2003). Trustful interactions during service can therefore aid feelings of escape within the pub space. The following example of trust within the pub space depicts how escape can be broken.

Rob, as discussed toward the end of chapter 4, benefits from paying on a tab in a pub he regularly visits. Rob is allowed to pay for his drinks at the end of the week as he does not like carrying cash around. Rob puts this down to the trust he has built with the licensee at that pub by being such a regular visitor over the years. He also sees this as a source of empowerment, as others may not be able to benefit from a tab, with it being more of a rarity in today’s pub environment. The trust displayed by the use of tab goes in two directions. The licensee of this pub must trust Rob to return to the pub with the money owed at the end of the week. While Rob trusts that the licensee will not pressure him for the money, keeping the environment around the payment relaxed. Rob can draw on feelings of escape from this interaction. However, it would not take a lot to interfere with Rob’s escapist feelings.

In a hypothetical period of events, Rob may return to the pub one day to find the licensee demanding the money he owes earlier than usual or to find the licensee has
changed. Resultantly, the trust expressed by Rob toward the licensee and the façade of escape are broken. Rob’s source of empowerment is taken from him and he no longer has a strong sense of escape through neighbourly service. Rob may even choose to not frequent that establishment anymore. Any of the key tangibles, in this case staff, can easily disrupt the feelings of escape experienced by pub-goers. Escape is therefore contingent on a fragile alignment of the tangibles of the pub space.

5.6.3 Does the consumer need escape?

The final critical point to be made on escape is whether it is always something which a consumer wants or needs. As Lowenthal states: ‘Tradition is a brake on progress’ (1985, p.69). Lowenthal’s argument is that at some point the perseverance of the past must surrender to the advancements and technological innovations associated with the fast moving present.

Despite escapist spaces and experiences being different and a relief from the status quo, they can also bring with them difficulties for consumers. For example Ritzer and Stillman (2001) outline how neighbourly service is much more time consuming than ‘McDonalised’ and system-oriented equivalents. Face-to-face neighbourly service gives consumers the chance to experience meaningful interactions during consumption and hence lead to feelings of escape. Escape cannot always fulfil the needs of the present-day consumer. For example, consumers may want the hassle free and efficient self-service at the shop rather than the longer face-to-face service also offered. Similarly, the longer waits associated with face-to-face service can lead to long waiting times at the bar in the pub space. This can be frustrating for the consumer. Escapist values cannot always outweigh the benefits of modern-day innovations. Rarely will the pub-goer choose to completely escape the outside world when they are within the pub space. Pub-goers would still watch televisions within the pubs showing the news, while those younger pub-goers interviewed (and some older) all had smartphones at hand.
for access to the internet and the outside world. A complete escape is therefore not fully beneficial for those living in the present day.

Even the pub space has to adapt to changes in the outside world, which has resultant implications on authenticity and nostalgia. A recent manifestation of this within the pub space is Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi is now expected to be present in pubs by consumers despite the apparent resistance to implement it from some Everards licensees. Even The Plough, which was situated in a small rural village, had Wi-Fi when it was requested. Such is the need of the internet in contemporary living.

There appears to be a tension between escape and the benefits of modernisation and innovation. It is a dichotomy within which a balance needs to be struck for consumers. The modern-day consumer wants to experience temporary escape which gives the benefits of a break from the drawbacks of the current consumption climate, but also experience the advantages of the fast-moving present. Full-time escape is not feasible and similarly constant exposure to the phoniness and spun nature of the contemporary consumer climate is draining for consumers (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Arnould and Price, 2000 and Boyle, 2003). Consumers need periods of escape to break up their lives, such as a trip to the pub, but not so complete an escape so as to leave the innovation and advantages of the modern day behind.

5.7 Summary

The above discussion shows how tangibles of the pub space can be authentic and nostalgic anchors and so provide an intangible feeling of escape for the pub-goer. Three key tangibles of the pub space (physical features, staff and clientele) can offer pub-goers the chance to experience something different to the negativity associated with today’s consumption contexts. The pub, this research suggests, fulfils a nostalgic
yearning for when things were perceivably more authentic or real by manifesting the nostalgic now. However, sometimes the nostalgic is longed for outside of the authentic.

Physical features, namely older or olde-worlde features, have the ability to capture the imagination of the pub-goer and hence lead to nostalgic feelings. The attached history of older pub buildings can make the pub space more meaningful for pub-goers. As it would be almost impossible to retain an olde-worlde interior without refurbishments, Grayson and Martinec’s (2004) framework of indexicality explains how this remains authentic for the pub-goer. As long as the pub building is a convincing imitation of the idealised notion of the olde-worlde pub for the pub-goer, it gives iconic authenticity.

Staff and their service are also shown to be representative of a time gone by. The evidence presented shows several ways in which staff can act in an authentic manner. Staff within the pubs visited were perceived as unspun, honest, natural, traditional and human, all of which are said to be elements of authenticity (Boyle, 2003). In doing this they give the pub-goer a neighbourly service which is representative of a time gone by and one the pub-goer is nostalgic for. Staff in pubs show how they can give consumers a break from a more ‘McDonaldised’ service and instead give something more real and attractive.

Clientele are also an anchor of escape for pub-goers. The social integration and community provided in pubs can be representative of an idealised nostalgic time for consumers. Beyond clientele showing they can be simple, human, natural and traditional, they also offer the opportunity to experience authentic community tradition and connection (Arnould and Price 2000; Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). The pub space can allow pub-goers to socialise with a diverse cross-section of people, something the current consumer climate may not allow. A real sense of community
characteristic of a time gone by which conveys authenticity can be experienced in the context of the pub, hence contributing to a feeling of escape.

Staff and clientele exclusively offer a democratic means of escape for pub-goers. Escape through experience of these two tangibles is not restricted to pubs with more middle-class or expensive décor, unlike notions of escape through perceptions of olde-worlde pubs. This type of escape is accessible in any pub through the sociality and human-scale of the space. The pub is also an affordable option for escape. While Ritzer and Stillman (2001) suggest that neighbourly service is preserved for elite or high-paying consumers, the pub is a space where social interaction can be experienced for a small price (such as a pint of beer). The pub is therefore an affordable space of authentic connection and nostalgic sociality for the consumer.
Chapter 6 Atmosphere within the pub space

6.1 Introduction

The discussion of escape in chapter 5 raises the question of how atmosphere, an important feature of pubs (Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Oldenburg, 1999; Orford et al. 2009), impacts on this intangible benefit for pub-goers. Although not directly explored in previous research, Knowles and Dingle (1996) suggest that the traditional nature of atmosphere in the British pub is an anchor of nostalgia and hence a means of escape for foreign visitors. Building upon their ideas, this research suggests that a pub’s atmosphere also contributes to feelings of escape for regular pub-goers.

As Knowles and Dingle (1996) posit, the pub can act as a means of experiencing the past temporarily. The historical features of pub buildings, including olde-worlde features, provide a nostalgic setting for pub-goers. The history and heritage of pubs, especially when this is reflected by the pub’s physical features, contribute to the character and hence the atmosphere of the space. The meaningful atmosphere of the space offers something different for pub-goers than everyday life, namely work and home (Oldenburg, 1999).

On a social level, it is the welcoming and interactive atmosphere within pubs which is attractive for pub-goers. As discussed in chapter 5, experiencing nostalgic forms of community and the authentic feelings associated with connection accumulate to give impressions of escape. A convivial pub atmosphere, therefore, can only aid pub-goers to experience escape as it can be ‘socially lubricating’ (Orford et al. 2009, p. 76). The sociality associated with a positive atmosphere in the pub space is unlikely to be experienced too frequently in hospitality settings in the current consumer climate, at least for non-elite consumers (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001). The holistic atmosphere of
the pub space therefore offers a novel attraction for consumers in their pursuit of escape.

This research suggests that atmosphere rests in-between the tangibles of the pub space and the intangible benefit of escape. The view of atmosphere adopted here is that it is as a result of multi-dimensional interactions across tangibles of the pub space as well as several intervening variables. This adopts a holistic view of atmosphere specifically applied to the pub. A conceptualisation of atmosphere in the pub space has not yet been established; this is despite atmosphere being consistently implicated as an important feature of the pub space (Orwell, 1946; Knowles and Dingle, 1996; Orford et al. 2009; Oldenburg 1999). The following chapter therefore offers a model of atmosphere specific to the pub space and gives evidence for its role in achieving the intangible benefit of escape.

Figure 6.1 A model of atmosphere in the pub space
6.2 A model of atmosphere in the pub space

Figure 6.1 depicts the key determinants in creating the atmosphere of the pub space. This research proposes that the three key tangibles of the pub space interact to create a perceivable atmosphere for pub-goers. Staff, clientele and physical and ambient features all exist in every pub one might visit. They therefore are the fundamental features of atmosphere within the pub space. Importantly, the perceiver (the pub-goer) is treated as part of the clientele in the model. The model also shows the directional interactions between tangibles within the pub space which can impact on perceived atmosphere. Despite not being shown in Figure 6.1, there are also several intervening variables which have an impact on perceptions of atmosphere within the pub space: Everards (the brewery); a pub’s focus on selling beer or food; temporal factors, pub location, pub-goers’ age, pub-goers’ cultural capital and socio-economic factors. These will be discussed within the presentation of the model below. These intervening variables incorporate both external impacts on atmosphere as well as individual differences between the perceptions of pub-goers.

6.2.1 Licensees and staff

Staff are one of the first points of social contact in a pub and their role goes above and beyond the serving of alcohol and food. The main focus of respondents was on how ‘welcoming’ or ‘interactive’ staff were. When staff did offer neighbourly service (Ritzer and Stillman 2001), the atmosphere was viewed more positively as compared to when this was not the case. Importantly, staff are an unavoidable point of social contact for pub-goers and so will always have some impact on the pub experience. In respondent accounts, the welcoming nature of staff consistently impacted on perceptions of atmosphere.
In the case of licensees specifically, their effect on atmosphere goes further than interactions with customers. Specifically in this case study, licensees had a joint involvement with Everards brewery in fitting out or refurbishing the physical features of their pubs. The impact of Everards will be treated as an intervening variable, as will be discussed below. The licensees’ impact on physical features is demonstrated by the arrow leading from licensee and staff to physical and ambient features. Licensees can personally portray what physical features they feel would positively impact on the atmosphere of their pub space.

A good example of this comes from Rick, the licensee at the Anchor. The Anchor was known to be a ‘rough’ pub which many pub-goers would avoid. However, Rick was repeatedly said to be the driving force behind the pub transforming into a welcoming and family-oriented space with a positive atmosphere. One way in which Rick achieved this was by decorating the space with cheerful features and themes. For example, there are several life-size figures of famous individuals, such as James Bond and Mike Tyson, scattered throughout the space. Despite not being an olde-worlde or heritage setting, the decorations make the atmosphere of the space more welcoming and accessible for families. The space no longer holds an intimidating atmosphere because of the decisions made by Rick and therefore thrives on being marketed towards families.

The direct effects of staff on clientele are demonstrated by the arrow between the two in Figure 6.1. Conversations with a manager and a licensee of separate pub sites showed their impact on clientele. The stand-in manager of The Montague spoke freely about shaping the clientele in the pub to suit his preferences through banning certain individuals. Similarly, Rick at The Anchor banned several pub-goers in order to reduce trouble in the pub to assist an upturn in perceived atmosphere. Licensees can directly influence other tangibles of the pub space which can inadvertently impact on the perceived atmosphere.
Although not addressed in this research, the atmosphere in a pub also can also impact on staff behaviours and well-being, as depicted by the two-directional arrow between the two in Figure 6.1. For example, Orford et al. (2009) found that when licensees turned a blind-eye to troublesome behaviours in their pubs it led to more negative perceptions of both the staff and atmosphere. Atmosphere can also become cyclic in nature (Heide and Grønhaug, 2006). A friendly atmosphere in a consumption space encourages customers to be friendlier and hence encourages staff to be even friendlier themselves; in essence this is an amplifying effect. Similarly, a negative handling of a customer can create an uncomfortable atmosphere for staff as customers may respond negatively to this.

6.2.2 Physical and ambient features

Physical and ambient features also impact on a pub’s atmosphere. The physical features implicated in having an impact on a pub’s atmosphere are building size, layout and perceived individuality of the space. This research also proposes the heritage/history of a pub can contribute to atmosphere. Respondents gave evidence for all of these influences as well as the impact of ambient features, as are discussed below.

Bitner (1992) outlines how a poorly designed spatial layout can negatively contribute to perception of atmosphere in a service setting. This lends support to the model presented here with respondents implicating the spatial layout of pubs as impacting on atmosphere. It was often smaller pubs and smaller rooms which were associated with a ‘cosy’ or ‘warm’ atmosphere by respondents. This is most likely due to the social benefits associated with closer proximity to other pub-goers. However, these preferences deviate between individuals. Dan and Ian both regularly visit The Hare and Hounds but disagreed on how the pub should be laid out. They did however have a mutual goal of attaining social benefits from the layout of the space. A pub’s layout
can therefore dictate whether a pub’s atmosphere is ‘socially lubricating’ or not (Orford et al. 2009, p.76).

The physical features of a pub have the ability to both attract and deter individuals into the pub space initially. David typified this idea:

‘You might see one which looks a bit moody or something like that and you might think nah I aint going in there’.

This is reflected by the arrow which directly points from physical and ambient features to clientele. Beyond this direct influence on clientele, physical features also contribute to a pub’s atmosphere. The aesthetics of an olde-worlde pub, for example, can act as distinctive features of the pub space, reflecting a pub’s heritage and individuality. A long history can capture the imagination of pub-goers, such as Jane:

‘It was more of a better atmosphere in the old places than it was in the modern’.

Although the reason behind heritage being implicated in perceptions of atmosphere are not entirely clear, it appears to show an association of atmosphere with escape. The historical nostalgia and authenticity surrounding buildings with heritage, much like tourist sites, contribute to a meaningful space with character and hence a perceivably good atmosphere. Pub-goers can therefore experience this atmosphere associated with notions of the past which is not available readily in the external world. A pub’s atmosphere is a novel experience and an expression of difference from the everyday. The intangible benefit of escape offered by atmosphere is reflected by the arrow leading from atmosphere toward clientele.

Pubs which have perceived individuality can also increase pub-goers’ assessments of atmosphere. For example, Arthur argues that for physical features to make a positive impact on atmosphere they need to bring both individuality and character. In particular he describes a pub space with ‘all sorts of fishing rods scattered around the pub’. This gave that space a more human and personal touch, making it distinctive and
hence giving more symbolic meaning to the consumer (Bitner, 1992). Pubs can offer unique experiences of atmosphere as compared to the outside world through their physical individuality.

Although the physical features of the pub have been discussed in previous chapters, ambient features have yet to be explained. These are the features of a pub which contribute to the mood of the building and appeal to the five senses (Bitner, 1992). Ambient features are heavily implicated in perceptions of atmosphere within the pub space. The ambient features commonly implicated in perceptions of atmosphere here were lighting, music and temperature. Admittedly, music and temperature cannot be regarded as tangible parts of the pub space in themselves but are as a result of tangible features of the pub space. Due to their impact on atmosphere it is important to include them in the model.

Firstly, in terms of temperature, warmer environments were often associated with positive assessments of atmosphere by respondents. This was especially the case for pubs which had fires, showing an interaction between aesthetic and ambient features in contributing to atmosphere.

Perceptions of music varied between individuals. Several respondents were conscious of music being too loud and limiting conversation within the pub space, while others appreciated how music could dictate whether a pub’s atmosphere was more relaxed or more upbeat. Similarly the style of lighting was implicated in the perception of atmosphere. For example, Tom stated: ‘The warmth and the warm lighting, make it an atmosphere straight away’. The ambience of the pub space appears to interact very closely with physical features to help contribute to atmosphere. It is these features which make the space more habitable outside of the social interaction with staff and other clientele. The incorporation of ambient features in this model of atmosphere is
lent support by Heide and Grønhaug (2006) who also implicate ambient features as having an important impact on atmosphere in hospitality settings.

6.2.3 Clientele

The final tangible which has an influence on atmosphere is the general clientele of the pub. Perhaps more so than in other service and consumption settings, the customers already in the pub have a huge impact on the atmosphere of the space. This is mainly due to the potential close physical proximity with other individuals for prolonged periods within the pub space as well as the likely chance of interactions with others.

All but one of the interviews implicated a pub’s clientele in contributing to atmosphere. Clientele, with staff, influence the sociality of the space. Clientele can therefore also contribute to the welcoming nature of the space. Patrick’s first experience of The Red Dragon typifies this. He found the regulars at the bar to be both interactive and welcoming despite him being foreign the space. Alternatively, Terry speaks about negative atmospheres in pubs due to him being a new face. This leaves him feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome. Clientele, with staff, therefore make contributions to whether the atmosphere is socially comfortable and welcoming.

The influence of staff and clientele on the welcoming nature of the pub space and its sociality can contribute to pub-goers’ intangible feelings of escape. In creating an atmosphere which is inviting to individuals and encourages interaction pub-goers can achieve the goal of connection in their pursuit of authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). The experience of a convivial atmosphere fulfils a nostalgic longing for community and cultural integration (Turner, 1987). Dan reflects the attitudes of several respondents:
‘I prefer drinking at the pub. I’m not one of these, you know, drink at home. I just don’t... I like to come out have a fresh beer and have that atmosphere. When I have a drink I like to mix with other people’.

Dan chooses to drink at the pub because he wants to experience a pub’s atmosphere which in turn allows him to connect to a community of pub-goers. Pub-goers tend to seek out sociality when they come to the pub in their quest to fulfil their need for escape. Atmosphere, therefore, has an influence on where social forms of escape can be achieved. This is again reflected by the arrow pointing from atmosphere to clientele.

Accounts of negative atmospheres from respondents were mostly focused on the prospect of trouble within the pub space. Clientele who are more inclined to be troublesome are said to make the atmosphere of the pub space ‘intimidating’. When trouble becomes associated with certain establishments it tends to tarnish opinions of the space and its atmosphere. Widely implicated in pub-goers accounts was the importance of feeling comfortable, something a troublesome atmosphere does not allow. Most respondents, therefore, emphasised avoidance of pubs associated with a troublesome atmosphere.

The two-directional arrow between atmosphere and clientele within the model demonstrates another potentially cyclical process in the pub space. If a pub-goer enters a pub which is perceived to have a good or friendly atmosphere they are more likely to stay, inadvertently becoming part of that pub’s clientele. That individual then contributes to the atmosphere for everyone else in the space. This process then continues when new customers enter the space, experience a good atmosphere and begin to build more loyalty to that pub. Therefore the atmosphere is not only an attraction for pub-goers, but they are very much part of it when they enter the space. Similarly, a negative atmosphere is likely to deter pub-goers from going into a pub. A decrease in the numbers of pub-goers in the space is likely to decrease the appeal of the space and contribute to a further decline in atmosphere.
6.2.4 Intervening variables

Before discussing a number of potential intervening variables which can impact on atmosphere, it is first important to outline the non-static nature of the model presented. This research does not suggest that three tangibles of the pub space are the only contributions to atmosphere. It also suggests that the tangibles of the space do not remain consistent. This research does, however, propose that these three tangibles will always impact on the atmosphere of any given pub space. While intervening variables can have an indirect impact on atmosphere through influencing the tangibles of the space; it is staff, physical and ambient features and clientele which create the atmosphere of the space. The following discussion will begin by outlining the external intervening variables which indirectly impact on atmosphere and conclude with the internal intervening variables which influence perceptions of atmosphere.

6.2.4.1 External intervening variables

Firstly, the brewery which owns the pub can have an impact on the tangibles creating atmosphere. As aforementioned, Everards jointly decides on the décor and layout of their pubs with the licensees. This has consequent impacts on atmosphere. Similarly, it is Everards who decide who becomes the licensee of one of their establishments. The licensee can be instrumental to a pub’s atmosphere and so Everards must account for this by deciding if they are a hospitable individual amongst their other qualities.

A slightly different issue is how consumers perceive Everards establishments and the atmospheres they carry in general. Around half of the respondents showed little or no interest in the owning brewery of the pubs they went to. The topic of Everards polarised opinions of the remaining respondents. For example, some respondents associated Everards with corporate traits, despite it being a small to medium sized
brewery as compared to other larger national brewers. Comparatively, Rob recognises Everards as a ‘local, friendly company’ which has ‘not gone multinational really’, something he perceives positively. Despite differing perceptions of Everards, none of the respondents avoided Everards establishments. While a brewery was not enough to deter these respondents, this has been shown to be the case with pubcos such as Wetherspoons, due to their relatively consistent nature (Jones et al. 2002).

Secondly, beer and food have indirect impacts on atmosphere. The beer served in a pub can lead to prejudgements of the atmosphere of that space due to the clientele who are likely to frequent it, as is the opinion expressed by Terry in chapter 4 who generalises about clientele.

Similarly, if pubs focus on serving food, and hence are more akin to pub-restaurants, this can have impacts on the tangible space. For example, Stephen remarks:

‘They converted the pub to a restaurant pub. When I wanted to go in for a drink there was really nowhere to have a drink. It was all centred around tables for meals, and I didn’t like that’.

In this case the focus on marketing for eaters had an effect on the spatial layout of the pub. This consequently had the ability to deter drinking customers such as Stephen, who likes pubs which are ‘wet-led’. The focus on being more of a ‘wet’ or ‘dry’ pub can therefore have indirect connotations on atmosphere through impacting who frequents the space and its spatial layout.

Temporal factors also have an indirect impact on atmosphere in the pub space. The time of day, the day of the week and the season all interact to change a pub’s atmosphere through its tangible features. The day of the week and time of day have clear impacts on the clientele who are in the space. Those individuals who prefer a quieter atmosphere are more likely to enjoy pub spaces in the daytime. Those who
seek a ‘lively’ atmosphere, a trait sought by some of the younger respondents, would frequent the space more at the weekend and at the night time. It is at this time, for example, music will be louder. Similarly, season has an impact on the tangibles implicated in creating atmosphere. A pub in the winter is more likely to have the fire on, attending to consumers’ aesthetic and ambient needs (temperature). Conversely, a pub with a beer garden may be more sought in the summer months, as was specified as important by some respondents. These temporal factors can therefore influence who is in the pub and the physical features put to use in the space.

The final external intervening variable indirectly impacting on atmosphere is a pub’s location. This has clear implications on the clientele who frequent the pub space. It tends to be more local individuals who frequent a pub space, which incidentally impacts on atmosphere. Pubs in lower socio-economic areas, such as The Anchor before Rick took over, may have more troublesome atmospheres due to the individuals who frequent the space. Whether the pub is more rural or urban can also impact on atmosphere. For example, The Plough is a small, cosy village pub decorated with fires whereas The White Oak is a pub with many tables spread throughout a large space. Each of these pubs offer different types of atmosphere for the pub-goer, but neither of these were perceivably negative from the point of view of this research or the pub-goers who frequented these spaces.

6.2.4.2 Internal intervening variables

While the three key tangibles of the pub space all contribute to atmosphere, this research suggests that atmosphere is socially constructed. Kotler (1973) proposes that atmosphere is perceived through the five senses of the individual. The tangibles above (with the addition of ambient features), therefore, all contribute to stimulating the five senses of the pub-goer. It is the individual make-up of each pub-goer which guides perceptions of atmosphere.
This research identifies several intervening variables as being important in an individual’s perception of atmosphere. Orford et al. (2009) identify preferred atmosphere as a topic on which many pub-goers disagree. The following presentation of internal intervening variables accounts for this observation. Much like the tangibles of the pub space interacting, these variables all interact to alter perceptions of a pub’s atmosphere. Some of these internal intervening variables have been touched upon in previous chapters, while others are yet to be discussed.

Evidence from this research supports the idea of age, cultural capital and socio-economic factors having an impact on pub-goers’ perceptions of the tangibles contributing to atmosphere. For example, older respondents tended to show more preference for a quieter atmosphere, whereas younger respondents appeared more tolerant of louder pub atmospheres.

Field-specific cultural capital has a large impact on the choice of pubs for individuals. Arthur, who is aged over 75, is someone who has experienced a large range of pubs due to his age and has therefore built a field-specific cultural capital in terms of pub atmosphere. In his experience, intimate pub settings with individual character have the best atmosphere. Stacey, as the youngest respondent (she is under 25), uses her field-specific cultural capital to inform her that relaxed atmospheres are associated with most pub spaces but for livelier atmospheres which she also enjoys, she should to go to bars or clubs.

Field-specific cultural capital is also an important internal variable for the licensee of a pub. From their own experiences, licensees learn what features might impact on a pub’s atmosphere positively or negatively. For example, Rick had been a licensee for several years before taking over The Anchor. In order to get rid of a troublesome
atmosphere he knew he had to ban certain individuals and market the physical features more toward families. A licensee will therefore actively use their cultural capital to make important decisions which impact on atmosphere.

Finally, socio-economic background can impact on perceptions of a good atmosphere. Those from a lower socio-economic background, as compared to those from a higher one, tended to put less emphasis on the importance of physical features of pubs. This is likely to influence their assessments of atmosphere, implicating the more social contributions to atmosphere (staff and clientele). It is also likely that price has an impact on whether individuals enter a pub depending on their socio-economic background. For example, Wetherspoons appears to be regarded as a place for individuals who want cheaper drinks. This leads to generalisations about the atmospheres of these pubs.

This research also suggests that other variables such as gender, personality, preferences and expectations can also impact upon perceptions of atmosphere. Due to restrictions of the sample and interviews used, however, evidence for the influence of gender, personality and expectations were not explored here. Research in other hospitality spaces does implicate these factors (Heide and Grønhaug, 2006).

To show how the three key tangibles of the pub space create atmosphere along with the impacts of intervening variables, this research puts forward two examples of the model of atmosphere in action. This will include an example of a positive atmosphere and one of a negative atmosphere. Both are built from respondent accounts.
6.2.5 An example of a positive atmosphere

The experiences of Patrick on his first visit to The Red Dragon are a good example of the interaction of tangibles producing a positive atmosphere. Firstly, Patrick was drawn into the pub due to his perception of it being a listed building informed by his general cultural capital formed from his occupation in the architectural industry. The interior echoed the exterior for Patrick, making it a hospitable olde-worlde setting. His first point of social contact was with the staff. They welcomed him and advised that the kitchen was closed temporarily. This was before he purchased anything, setting the precedent of the friendly and customer-focused nature of the space. Patrick chose to sit at the bar. Instead of perceiving Patrick as invading their spatial territory, the regulars were welcoming and had banter with him. This is an example of all the tangibles of the space interacting to produce the type of ‘socially lubricating’ atmosphere Orford et al. outline (2009, p. 76). Patrick therefore demonstrates that the convivial atmosphere experienced allowed him to achieve connection with other individuals and hence escape through authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). Patrick also expresses his wish to return to The Red Dragon in the future. Experiencing an atmosphere which aids escape encourages Patrick to want to become a regular at that pub.

6.2.6 An example of a negative atmosphere

Using the responses of pub-goers, a typical negative atmosphere can be outlined. The Anchor before it was taken over by its newest licensee (over 5 years ago) will be the setting for this example. From the outside the pub is not overly attractive and certainly would not appeal to pub-goers who want an olde-worlde setting. The gloomy interior mirrors this, with a lack of lighting and warmth. It lacks personality, is very open and so does not offer a spatially intimate setting. Members of staff appear rude and are not interested in welcoming individuals or socialising with them. The clientele are intimidating and the areas in which regulars sit are very exclusive. ‘Outsiders’ are not
welcomed into the space. Trouble is a regular occurrence at night, with known drug dealers frequenting the space. To go to this pub and experience a comfortable atmosphere is rare. This is the kind of troublesome atmosphere pub-goers may want to avoid and struggles to fulfil a longing for escape.

6.3 Limitations of the model

The model presented is as a result of exploratory research with 18 individuals. It is therefore unlikely to cover all influences on atmosphere for all pub-goers in all pubs. For example, there was not sufficient evidence here for some of the intervening variables, such as gender and personality, having an influence on pub-goers’ perceptions of atmosphere. While the impact of internal variables such as these remains ambiguous, it is still important to take them into account until they are explored more. Research which is more finely attuned to exploring the individual differences of clientele could expand upon the presented model. In particular, the preferences and perceptions of certain demographics, including those of different ethnicities or cultural backgrounds, may be pivotal in applying research in this area to the pub space.

The contingency and complexity of atmosphere make it a difficult aspect of the pub to model. Much like the use of the term olde-worlde in the previous two chapters, the properties of atmosphere and its conception vary between pub-goers. However, from the evidence presented here, it is argued that pub-goers’ perceptions of what creates atmosphere in the pub space always involves at least one of the three key tangibles. The model also accepts there are other unmentioned variables which can impact on atmosphere but asserts these three tangibles are the most important constructs of atmosphere within the pub space. It is also possible that certain tangibles can be more predominate in their impact on atmosphere in certain pubs. For example the respondents in pubs in lower socio-economic areas, such as The Anchor, put much
emphasis on social influence in the space (through staff and clientele). Physical features therefore had little perceivable impact on respondents’ perceptions of the space. Contrastingly, the olde-worlde nature of The Red Dragon was perceived to contribute heavily to the atmosphere. The tangibles which impact on atmosphere are therefore not always equally balanced.

Finally, atmosphere is not a measurable trait in service settings. Despite this, the model of atmosphere Heide and Grønhaug (2006) present moves towards making it a measurable trait. This research suggests that atmosphere cannot be quantifiable and attempts to quantify it would not be advantageous due to the deviation surrounding the term. It is for this reason that evidence from qualitative research is needed, such as the research at hand. Through gaining insightful responses from individuals who regularly experience the pub space, meaningful theoretical underpinnings of atmosphere can be outlined. Qualitative research has more freedom to incorporate different perceptions of atmosphere within the pub space, as shown by the model presented here. The model presented is therefore a platform from which to build upon.

6.4 A summary of pub atmosphere: a holistic approach

In summary, this research suggests that a pub’s atmosphere is created as a result of the three key tangibles of the pub space: staff, physical and ambient features and clientele. This in turn contributes to a pub-goers’ intangible feelings of escape through authenticity and nostalgia. None of the tangibles alone can constitute a pub’s atmosphere. Atmosphere is a holistic trait of the pub space and is as a result of an interaction between these three tangibles. Atmosphere is treated here as a defining feature of pubs, not simply its staff, physical and ambient features and clientele, but an important trait in its own right.
This idea of atmosphere being a holistic trait suggests that its parts need to be consistent in their contribution to atmosphere. For example, pub-goers might be drawn into a beautiful and cosy olde-worlde pub setting only to find the staff rude and clientele unwelcoming. This does not make a consistent welcoming atmosphere. Pub-goers need a consistent atmosphere for the pub experience to be viewed favourably and to offer escape. There can, however, be exceptions to this. As mentioned, respondents in pubs within lower socio-economic areas put more emphasis on social contributions to atmosphere: staff and clientele. It is in these spaces that social forms of escape are more prevalent, through notions of community and connection (Turner, 1987; Beverland and Farrelly, 2010).

The above discussion implicates the licensee and their staff as the most important tangibles in creating atmosphere, as well as being the most prevalent anchors of escape. Staff not only directly deal with customers to contribute to atmosphere and escape through neighbourly service; they also have an indirect influence on atmosphere through the shaping of both physical features and clientele. Staff and clientele create a more social atmosphere, creating an escapist environment for the pub-goer. The addition to atmosphere through physical features, such as an olde-worlde building, appears to act as an added bonus to the pub-goer. Although this research suggests a cosy setting is again facilitating for social interaction.

This research suggests atmosphere to be one of the most important draws into the pub space. Although it is three key tangibles which interact to produce atmosphere, it is down to the pub-goer how the space is perceived. It would appear that tangibles which contribute to a friendlier and more welcoming atmosphere are preferred because of the resultant feelings of escape which are gained. This is what makes the pub an attractive third space for pub-goers.
Chapter 7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This research explored the important features of pubs in pub-goer assessments of the space. This holistic approach to the pub also showed how these features can give intangible benefits to pub-goers. This was explored using interviews with pub-goers within six Everards pubs. In order to expand upon the concepts of authenticity, nostalgia and escape—which have not been clearly defined or developed in the existing literature—this project adopted three research questions: What are the tangible aspects and intangible benefits of the pub space? How do pub-goers perceive the tangible features of the pub space? In what ways do the tangibles of the pub space contribute to intangible feelings associated with the pub experience?

To address these questions semi-structured interviewing was adopted. This allowed expressions of perceptions of the pub space in an informal conversational style suited to the pub space, while also following an interview guide. Interviews were supplemented by researcher observations of each pub space. The evidence from interviews resulted in the following key findings.

7.2 A summary of key findings

7.2.1 The perceptions of the tangibles of the pub space

Firstly, this research identified three key tangibles in pub-goer perceptions of the pub space: physical features, staff and clientele. In judging the pub space, it was these three features which took precedent over other tangibles such as beer and food. This emphasised the nature of the pub being a third space, rather than just somewhere to eat or drink (Oldenburg, 1999). It was therefore the surrounding physical space and the two sources of social interaction, staff and clientele which appeared most important for pub-goers.
These three tangibles were shown to have an important interaction in forming first impressions of a pub. Firstly, the physical features of a pub provide the initial aesthetical impressions of both the external and interior building. If the pub was a traditional or olde-worlde building it tended to be more attractive. Comparatively an overly-modern or unkempt pub tended to be avoided. After entering the space it is both staff and clientele which provide the first social impressions of the space.

It was also important for pub-goers that a welcome was extended to them, through both staff and clientele, when they entered the space. When this was not the case, it was enough to deter pub-goers from the space. This welcome was an expected as a characteristic of the pub. After affording more loyalty to the pub space, the physical features of a pub become less important and it is the staff and clientele who encourage pub-goers to return. Staff and clientele were shown as a constant point of sociality for pub-goers and are both driving factors behind the pub being a hospitable environment.

7.2.2 Anchors of escape within the pub space

The pub was shown to be a multi-dimensional source of the intangible benefit of escape for the pub-goer. This research showed that the three key tangibles space were often perceived as anchors of authenticity and nostalgia, two means of escape (Arnould and Price, 2000; Cutcher, 2008). In their positive assessments of the pub space, pub-goers constantly highlighted how the three key tangibles of the pub space were associated with a collective idealised notion of the past (historical nostalgia) and the real or authentic. This also gave evidence of Hemetsberger and Pirker’s (2006) notion of historical sites, in this case the pub, manifesting historical nostalgia in the present.

Firstly, when pubs have older physical features or an attached heritage they can give pub-goers intangible feelings of escape. Much like tourist sites, some pubs offer the
chance to experience buildings with features which are different from today. It was olde-worlde buildings which tended to be preferred by pub-goers, mainly due to their spatial-temporal links with the past. A consistent olde-worlde exterior and interior represented a point of iconic authenticity for pub-goers (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). That is, they represented an authentic copy of an original. The original in this case, this research suggests, is the nostalgic archetypal pub space for the pub-goer. Although this ideal representation differs from pub-goer to pub-goer and is unlikely to ever existed, it is always representative of a time gone by.

Staff offered a second point of escape for the pub-goer. Pub staff tended to offer a neighbourly form of service which was something different from the everyday. This is a type of service which comes across as genuine and hence more authentic, differentiating it from other service spaces. This was shown by service being associated with Boyle’s (2003) elements of authenticity, as depicted in the discussion of staff as authentic in chapter 5. It is also a type of service which is representative of a time gone by. Again, pub service represented a manifestation of a historical nostalgia for person-oriented service which was more prevalent in the past, even if this had never been experienced by the pub-goer.

The third tangible shown to anchor escape was clientele. Other individuals within a pub offered the chance to experience both authentic and nostalgic forms of community. This research showed that achieving the personal goal of connection is made possible within the pub space. In achieving this personal goal pub-goers could reach authenticity (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). Clientele were also shown to be a source of community, something individuals are said to nostalgically long for (Turner, 1987; Cutcher, 2008). The pub is a space where social interaction is encouraged and natural for pub-goers, discriminating it from other spaces in everyday life. It is on this idea that a pub-goers’ escape rests. The heightened social integration of the pub space can therefore anchor the intangible benefit of escape.

Importantly, both staff and clientele offer forms of social escape which can be accessed in an array of pub spaces. Escape through physical features tended to be
dependent on the pub having features expressing historic individuality or olde-worlde features. Both social forms of escape, however, were shown to be available in all the pub spaces, independent of their heritage, history and physical features.

The examples of authenticity and historical nostalgia in the pub space also revealed the overlapping nature of the two concepts. Pub-goer responses suggested that anchors of nostalgia in the pub space were also often perceived as authentic. They were not inseparable however, with pub-goers showing they wanted manifestations of nostalgia in the pub space outside of authenticity. Three examples of this are shown in discussing problems of escape toward the end of chapter 5.

7.2.3 The novel atmosphere of the pub space

Finally, this research identified atmosphere as an important factor in the evaluation of pub spaces. This research suggested the three key tangibles of the pub to be instrumental in creating the atmosphere of the space. A model of atmosphere was presented to depict this (see Figure 6.1). This model shows physical and ambient features, staff and clientele as the main components which interact to create a pub’s atmosphere. This research suggested that while atmosphere is constructed as a result of other features of the pub space, it should also be treated as a feature of the pub in itself. Atmosphere also makes an important contribution to intangible feelings of escape for the pub-goer.

The physical features of the pub space were shown to add meaning and character to the space, especially when there is tied history to the pub. It was found that more distinctive spaces were perceived to have a better atmosphere. Spaces with distinctive traits like a long history are not always needed for positive evaluations of atmosphere. They do however contribute to a more meaningful space with spatial-temporal links which hence contribute to feelings of escape through both authenticity and nostalgia.
It is staff and clientele who were shown to be essential in the construction of atmosphere.

Offering the first point of social contact within the space, staff were shown to make a big contribution to atmosphere. The use of a person-oriented neighbourly service allowed a welcoming atmosphere for pub-goers. It is in this kind of atmosphere that a pub-goer can feel comfortable. Licensees for Everards pubs were also implicated in the construction of atmosphere, as they make crucial decisions on the clientele who frequent their pubs and the physical features of their pubs. Changes of spatial layout, for example, were perceived to have important social connotations for respondents.

The clientele of the space also contribute to perceptions of atmosphere. Along with staff, clientele have a role in making the atmosphere convivial for all those in the space. From their welcoming nature, they can contribute heavily to the sociality of the space. These did not necessarily have to be deeper meaningful interactions, but instead could be superficial forms such as banter. With staff, clientele were shown to construct the social element of atmosphere of the pub space. This is all despite a lack of economic profit for clientele being welcoming, unlike staff. Instead, clientele could be welcoming or unwelcoming to aid their own agendas, such as meeting new people or deterring individuals who they may feel are invading their space.

The model presented does not suggest that the atmosphere of the pub space is a stable trait. Instead, it is indirectly altered by several external intervening variables. These variables tend to impact on the key tangibles of the pub space, inadvertently effecting atmosphere. This research showed evidence for the following variables having indirect impacts on atmosphere: Everards (the brewery); a focus on selling beer or food; temporal factors and location.
Finally, evidence was put forward for internal intervening variables which impact on pub-goer perceptions of atmosphere. These included age, cultural capital and socio-economic factors. Each factor interacts to impact on judgements of atmosphere.

This research also suggested that a positive pub atmosphere is instrumental in offering pub-goers social forms of escape. This is supported by the ‘socially lubricating’ effect of atmosphere that Orford et al. (2009, p. 76) describe. In entering a space where a pub-goer feels comfortable to interact with others, the personal goal of connection can be achieved along with experiencing notions of community.

A hospitable pub atmosphere does not just contribute to superficial interactions but also superficial friendships. Friendships within the pub space do not have obligations, unlike relationships in the outside world. By being a third space, with a convivial atmosphere, the pub-goer can enter and leave the space when they want and face no repercussions. This is an escape from the deeper relationships of the outside world which rest on obligations to be maintained. A positive atmosphere is therefore shown to contribute to escape by being novel setting which facilitates sociality, offering a point of difference from the pressures of everyday life. This perhaps suggests that notions of community in the pub space, as addressed in chapter 5, are not as deep and meaningful as pub-goers may like to think they are.

7.3 Limitations and reflections

This research poses limitations of both a methodological and conceptual nature. Some stand-out limitations of this research will be discussed here.
7.3.1 Methodological limitations

Chapter 3 raised several reflections on the methodological processes adopted by this research. Worth revisiting are the issues which surrounded participant recruitment. Firstly, recruiting respondents within this research was difficult. Despite the apparent friendly nature of the pub in general, it was often difficult to approach respondents in the pub. Pub-goers rarely sat alone. Recruitment, therefore, often involved approaching groups of individuals and interrupting them during their leisure time. As researcher, this posed challenges of confidence. Moreover, when pub-goers were approached, many did not wish to take part in the research as there was no real incentive other than good will. These two issues interacted to pose problems of recruitment and was partly the reason for only 18 respondents taking part in this research. The respondents who did agree to take part raise a second issue to reflect upon.

This research used six pub sites to recruit 18 respondents. Almost half of these respondents were retired men and so fit a similar demographic to one another (see chapter 3 for demographic information). Only four of the respondents were women. This made comparisons across demographical information difficult. The main variables that respondents were compared across were their age or the socio-economic of their respective pub. A larger pool of respondents may have offered more patterns to be sought across the demographics of participants, especially gender. It was unclear how gender impacted on assessments of a pub’s atmosphere or indeed notions of escape. Due to the pub being dominated by males, it may be that women do not perceive the space as an opportunity of escape. The lack of women who made up the sample made it difficult to interpret such differences however.

It cannot be argued that the sample of respondents used here would be a representative sample of British pub-goers. However, by taking an interpretivist
approach, this research accepts the contextual factors impacting on the findings. This research did not seek a defining cause and effect relationship within the pub space but instead looked at patterns across the meanings within pub-goer responses. The findings surrounding the tangible anchors of escape for pub-goers, as well as the facilitation of escape through atmosphere, instead offer a platform from which to build in related research in the pub space.

7.3.2 Conceptual limitations

Further limitations were presented in chapters 5 and 6 when applying escape and a model of atmosphere to the public house. One salient issue with theories of escape through both authenticity and nostalgia is the idea that escape is not needed. As touched upon in chapter 5, consumers do not necessarily need forms of escape in their lives. Despite the drawbacks of the current consumer climate, consumers draw several benefits from the fast-moving innovations of today. With escape being linked to notions of the past here, it cannot be expected that consumers always wish to be free of technological advancements and other traits of the contemporary consumer climate in preference of a more simple time.

It is for this reason that it is important that the pub also adapts to the outside world. Despite pubs being a traditional consumption setting as well as retaining tradition through their physical features and hence retaining spatial-temporal authenticity and nostalgia, the pub cannot offer complete escape. This research suggests that if this was the case, it would no longer be a popular hospitality space. The pub presents a balance between its tradition as a social institution while also incorporating innovation such as WI-FI, contactless card payments or fruit machines. Escape tends to be sought by the pub-goer but no so much that the comforts of modern life are completely lost. Escape is therefore only needed as a temporary respite by those who seek it.
It is also important to consider the model of atmosphere put forward by this research cannot encapsulate all potential impacting factors on atmosphere. From the respondents spoken to, it was clear that the physical and ambient features, staff and clientele were the driving factors influencing atmosphere in the pub space. It is important to accept that several other intervening variables, beyond those mentioned, will also impact upon perceptions of a pub’s atmosphere. This research formulated a conceptualisation of atmosphere from the responses of 18 individuals and therefore the model presented cannot be representative of all pubs. It does however present a model specific to the pub space, something novel to this research area, and a base from which to build. The implications of the findings presented by this research and the potential for future research will now be discussed.

7.4 Contextualising the findings and directions for future research

7.4.1 Investigating the impact of alcohol

This research opens avenues for future exploration as well as having potential implications for the pub trade. Firstly, this research shows a rare holistic view of the public house. Modern research in the context of the pub has often concentrated on one element of the space or on rural pubs (Orford et al. 2009; Sandiford and Divers, 2014). Conversely, this research clearly displays the key components of the space to those who enter it: physical features, staff, clientele and a pub’s atmosphere.

The finding that alcohol can become overlooked in assessments of the space is one that is novel and surprising taking into account it is the historically defining feature of the space. This research asserts that this is a tentative finding. Alcohol may be an overlooked feature of the space until it is removed or changed as well as the possibility of its importance being understated due to the nature of the questions asked. Craig’s example in chapter 4 about the avoidance of a pub associated with unreliable beer perhaps demonstrates the impact of bad beer.
It would therefore be interesting to explore further the importance of alcohol to the space. As briefly touched upon in chapter 4, it is hard to envisage many of the respondents entering the pub space if alcohol was not on offer. This is despite more emphasis put on both the physical and social attributes of the space as well as the attached intangible feelings of escape for pub-goers. It may be worth exploring further just how important alcohol is to the space and if it is needed to maintain patronage to the pub. As one of Orford et al’s (2009, p. 76) respondents suggest, it is alcohol as well as atmosphere which is ‘socially lubricating’. This has implications for the pub trade as a strong alcohol focus may not be essential in reversing the decline of the pub trade. This requires much deeper investigation first, however.

7.4.2 The interaction between authenticity and nostalgia

This research showed the pub to have multi-dimensional anchors of escape through the appeal of authenticity and nostalgia. Beyond the preliminary ideas of Knowles and Dingle (1996), who implicate nostalgia and escape in overseas tourists’ attraction to the pub, the space has not been linked to escape before. This research therefore demonstrates how the pub, like historical tourist sites and other consumption contexts can be a space of escape for the consumer. This is mainly due to the pub being perceived as a meaningful setting for consumers and hence being associated with notions of ‘something’ rather than ‘nothing’, something rare in today’s consumption climate (Ritzer, 2007, pp. 36-38).

Beyond this, this research contributes specifically to the authenticity and nostalgia fields. It gives another demonstration of the association between the two concepts and moves towards explaining their link. Hemetsberger and Pirker (2006) suggest that authenticity is a pre-requisite of historical nostalgia. Instead, this research contends that the nostalgic past is often perceived to have more examples of authenticity than the present, mainly due to the fake nature of consumption contexts in the present.
Therefore, anchors of historical nostalgia, such as the physical features, staff and clientele of the pub, often also possess elements of authenticity. This research could not find examples of authenticity in the context of the pub space when it was not also representative of nostalgia however. This is a novel finding and suggests that authenticity in the pub space could be contingent on links with the past. This may have been due to the pub being heavily endowed in tradition and the spatial-temporal nature of the demonstrated anchors of authenticity and nostalgia (Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Hemetsberger and Pirker, 2006).

The link between authenticity and nostalgia needs to be explored further. Research is yet to take a focus on this interaction in consumption settings. The findings of this research begin to explore their relationship, but only in the context of the pub. Future research needs to address this interaction more deeply and in other consumer settings. Research should investigate whether authenticity is contingent on links to the past in other consumption settings as for now this link remains ambiguous.

**7.4.3 Conceptualising atmosphere further**

This research put forward a model of atmosphere specific to the pub space, something literature in the atmosphere field has yet to do. It was necessary to explore atmosphere in the context of the pub as it makes up such an important part of the service product of the space (Knowles and Dingle, 1996). The model put forward here begins to conceptualise atmosphere in the pub space but is only as a result of exploratory research.

Further qualitative research is required to build upon the model of atmosphere presented here. For example, this research could not find clear evidence for the impact of the internal intervening variables of gender, personality and expectations on assessments of atmosphere. Research in the pub space could take a more focused approach to atmosphere and build upon this exploratory research. This research offers
a good starting point in conceptualising atmosphere but requires wider evidence to become applicable to a wider array of pub spaces.

Being a chain of pubs may have implications on perceptions of atmosphere. The use of Everards in this case study meant that the pubs were not part of a chain. Instead, each Everards pub retains its own individuality, as reflected by the six sites visited. Some respondents would stereotype the atmospheres in certain pubcos, such as Wetherspoons, despite them owning well over 500 other outlets (Jones et al. 2002). When owning companies (or breweries) do not market their pubs as a chain they may avoid negative attributions about their atmosphere in general, as shown by respondents’ opinions on Everards. The atmospheres and features of each of these pubs were treated individually.

**7.5 Concluding remarks**

This research took a holistic approach to exploring the key components of the pub space. This is something not achieved in recent research in the pub space. The chance to escape the woes of the present day can be achieved by experiencing aspects of the space.

Several features of Orwell’s (1946) romanticised depiction of the perfect pub still hold true today: Staff who take a ‘personal interest in everyone’; clientele who go to the pub ‘for conversation as much as for the beer’ and the appeal of atmosphere. While innovation in pubs is still important, it is the traditional aspects of the pub which seem to hold the most importance.
Appendix A

Participant information sheet and consent form

The Pub Experience: A Qualitative Study of the Tangible and Intangible Aspects of Pub-goers’ Perceptions of Pubs

October 2014

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. This information sheet provides an overview of the research, how the data that you supply will be used, and how we will provide protection of your privacy.

Researcher: My name is Thomas Rowell (tr105@le.ac.uk). I am a postgraduate student from the University of Leicester School of Management. My supervisors are Dr Jennifer Smith Maguire (***@le.ac.uk) and Professor Steve Brown (*****@le.ac.uk), also from the University of Leicester School of Management.

Purpose of data collection: I am conducting interviews as part of a University of Leicester MPhil research project that explores consumers’ experiences and perceptions of the pub. The research is part funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) through the IRSA (Innovation through the Research Support Accelerator) scheme, by the University of Leicester, and by Everards Brewery PLC. The data will be used as the basis of my MPhil dissertation, and to produce a findings report for Everards. The data will also possibly be used for further academic publications and outputs, such as conference papers, academic journal articles, and popular/trade press pieces.

Details of Participation: The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and is much like an informal conversation—there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. I am interested in hearing your experiences and opinions about pubs. The interview will take place at a mutually convenient time and public place, such as a pub, cafe, or similar. I will also ask you to complete a short demographics questionnaire to collect some general details, including age, gender, education, and how often you visit pubs and other drinking establishments.
During the interview, I will take notes, and—with your permission—digitally record the interview to help me capture an accurate account. The recording will be transcribed into a written format. All written and audio records will be accessed only by myself and my supervisors, and stored securely using password protection and locked cabinets.

Your participation in the project is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to answer any of the questions asked, and to withdraw from the interview at any point, including after the interview has taken place. You will be able to contact myself following the interview using the above contact details to withdraw from the study without giving any reason. It is important to exercise this right to withdraw if you are unhappy in any way with your participation. The information received will be treated in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Data will be anonymised: this means that neither you, nor anyone you mention in the interview, will be identified by name.

Please feel free to ask me any questions about the project or what participation involves. To discuss any further details about the project after the interview, please contact myself or my supervisors (contact information at the top of this letter). If you would like to receive a copy of the final dissertation, please provide me with an email address and I will be happy to send it to you after submission (December 2015).

Thank you again for participating!

If you would like to ask any questions about this study, or if you have taken part and would like to withdraw, please contact:

Thomas Rowell  
Email: tr105@le.ac.uk

**CONSENT STATEMENT**

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the research at any time up until when the project is to be submitted, without giving any reason. This includes the right to refuse to answer any questions asked. I may withdraw using the contact details provided by the researcher at the top of the information sheet.
2. I understand what my participation will involve.

3. I understand that my data will be anonymised and only the researcher and supervisors will have access to the raw data. The identity of any other person(s) mentioned during the interview will also be anonymised.

4. I understand that I will be able to obtain general information about the results of this research by giving the researcher my email address.

5. I understand that the data (including direct quotations) will be used in an MPhil dissertation and a findings report for Everards, and potentially in publicly-available academic publications and other outputs.

6. All of my questions about the research have been satisfactorily answered.

7. I am happy for my interview to be voice recorded.

   Yes ☐       No ☐

I agree to participate.

Participant’s signature: ________________________________

Participant’s name (please print): ________________________________

Date: __________

If you would like to receive a summary of the results by e-mail,
when this is available, please provide your email address: ________________________________

Please note that this form will be kept separately from your data.
Appendix B

Interview Guide
Opening/ warm up question: how often do you go to the pub?

Let’s talk about this particular pub—what brings you here?

- Probe: Why this pub versus another pub or bar (proximity to home/work; quality of beer; atmosphere; etc.)

- Probe: Does Everards itself play a role? (e.g. beer quality, history, local, family-run)

- Probe: **Physical aspects** of the pub (layout, decor, exterior, etc.) Why?

- Probe: **Objective aspects** of the pub (beer, food, cost, etc.)

- Probe: **Atmosphere** (other people in the pub, quiet, loud etc.)

- Probe: **Individuality** and personality OR predictability?
• Probe: Do staff and Licensees play a role?

• Probe: Do you tend to drink at home as well? Why choose coming here over home?

Can you tell me about your ideal sort of pub?

• Follow-up question: Can you give me an example of a good or ‘best’ experience at this/any pub?

• Follow-up question: Can you give me an example of a bad or ‘worst’ experience at this/any pub?

• Follow-up question: If you were travelling in a different part of the country and were looking for a pub, what would you look for or avoid?

• Probe: Pub types, notions of ‘traditional’, ‘foodie’, ‘drinks led’ etc.

• Probe: Physical aspects of the pub (layout, decor, exterior, garden etc.)
• Probe: **Objective aspects** of the pub (beer, food, cost, etc.)

• Probe: **Atmosphere** (other people in the pub etc.)

• Probe: Aspects of **individuality or personality**

• Probe: In what ways does Everards fit/not fit with the ideal?
Appendix C

Demographic questionnaire

Age

☐ 18-25 years  ☐ 26-35 years  ☐ 36-45 years  ☐ 46-55 years
☐ 56-65 years  ☐ 66-75 years  ☐ Over 75 years

Gender

☐ Male  ☐ Female

Education

☐ University postgraduate degree
☐ Undergraduate university degree
☐ A levels
☐ GCSE/ O levels (or diploma equivalent)
☐ None of the above

Occupation (Current or most recent)

☐ Professionals, employers, managers
☐ Intermediate non manual workers
☐ Junior non-manual workers
☐ Skilled manual worker

☐ Semi-skilled manual worker

☐ Unskilled manual worker

☐ Pensioners, depend on the welfare state for income (Unemployed)

☐ Student

**Frequency of attending a pub**

☐ Once or twice a year

☐ Once or twice every 3 months

☐ Once or twice a month

☐ Once or twice a week

☐ Most days a week

☐ Every weekday

**Frequency of attending this pub**

☐ First visit

☐ Once or twice a year

☐ Once or twice every 3 months

☐ Once or twice a month

☐ Once or twice a week
☐ Most days a week
☐ Every weekday

**Who do you normally attend a pub with?**

☐ Alone ☐ Group of friends ☐ Partner ☐ Family

**Distance travelled to this pub**

☐ Under 1 mile
☐ 1-3 miles
☐ More than 3 miles

**Frequency, if at all, of attending alternative place to eat and/or consumer alcohol?**

**Restaurants**

☐ Once or twice a year ☐ Once or twice every three months
☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Once or twice a week
☐ Most days of the week ☐ Every weekday

**Bars**

☐ Once or twice a year ☐ Once or twice every three months
☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Once or twice a week
☐ Most days of the week ☐ Every weekday
Cafes

☐ Once or twice a year  ☐ Once or twice every three months

☐ Once or twice a month  ☐ Once or twice a week

☐ Most days of the week  ☐ Every weekday

Clubs

☐ Once or twice a year  ☐ Once or twice every three months

☐ Once or twice a month  ☐ Once or twice a week

☐ Most days of the week  ☐ Every weekday

Other

☐ Once or twice a year  ☐ Once or twice every three months

☐ Once or twice a month  ☐ Once or twice a week

☐ Most days of the week  ☐ Every weekday

If Other please state .................................................................
Appendix D

Ethics confirmation

To: Thomas Rowell

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: tr105-6a71

(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

13/11/2014 15:38:05

School of Management

Project Title: The Pub Experience: A Qualitative Study of the Tangible and Intangible Aspects of Pub-goers’ Perceptions of Pubs

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.
Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be compiled with

- http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice
- http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/


Barry, N. (2008) ‘Priest takes a night off to meet the faithful in the Four Marys ale house; tired of preaching to empty pews, a priest realised he would have to step out of his Episcopalian church to search for his 'lost sheep'. He decided he would most likely find them in a pub - so arranged meetings in his local. Nicola Barry dropped by for a pint and to find out how Father Blackledge was faring’, Sunday Express Scottish Edition, October 19, p. 50.


Hirst, A. (2011) ‘Golden memory at the fleece; eating out In the early 1980s the owner was a chatty bloke with curly hair, large glasses and seemingly a perma tan who called Coca-Cola cokey wokeys. My, how times have changed’, Huddersfield daily examiner, April 8, p.2.


Hogarth Press.