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## Craft beverage tourism development: The contributions of social capital

Whitney Knollenberg<sup>a,\*</sup>, Claudia Gil Arroyo<sup>a</sup>, Carla Barbieri<sup>a</sup>, Kathryn Boys<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University, Campus Box 8004, Raleigh, NC, 27695, USA<sup>b</sup> Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, North Carolina State University, USA

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role that social capital plays in synergizing two growing components of economic development for many communities - the tourism and craft beverage industries. By focusing on an emerging craft beverage tourism destination, Wake County in North Carolina (United States), this study illustrates the economic development outcomes that can be generated by craft beverage tourism and the forms of social capital needed to establish and sustain this type of niche tourism. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 30 stakeholders revealed that craft beverage tourism contributes to economic development outcomes such as: (1) community capacity, (2) firm and industry capacity, (3) entrepreneurial activity, and (4) innovative infrastructure. Both bridging and bonding social capital supported these outcomes in the forms of (1) collaboration among stakeholders, (2) support for new members of the industry, (3) craft beverage stakeholders' involvement with the community, and (4) creation of a craft beverage destination. Results indicate that bonding social capital is a crucial resource for establishing and sustaining Wake County's craft beverage industry and its development as a craft beverage destination. However, there is only limited utilization of bridging social capital in efforts to advance craft beverage tourism development. Collectively, these findings outline the economic development benefits of craft beverage tourism and the social capital resources needed to achieve those benefits. These insights can facilitate the development of CBT products.

### 1. Introduction

As an industry, tourism continues to strive to be recognized for its contribution to economic development (Rosentraub & Joo, 2009). Travel, whether for leisure or businesses, is often the first opportunity for someone to experience the quality of life and economic opportunities a community can offer. This encounter may lead a tourist to see that community as a potential place to move, retire, attend school, or start a business (Longwoods International, n.d). The transition of an individual from a tourist to a community member contributes to the growth of a community's workforce and tax base, and has the potential to establish new businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities (Stolarick, Denstedt, Donald, & Spencer, 2011). These changes can, in turn, contribute to achieving economic development goals such as diversifying a region's revenue, increasing new business formation, attracting and retaining a stronger workforce, and increasing average income. The benefits of the tourism industry may extend to economic gains for residents as well. For instance, Nilsson and Reid (2018) concluded that proximity to a brewery increases housing values.

For a community to maximize the economic benefits of tourism development, it must attract visitors by showcasing its assets, such as good quality of life, diverse food and beverage options, and recreational activities. The growing craft beverage industry, which includes beer, wine, and spirits (American Craft Spirits Association, 2018; Brewers Association, 2019), is demonstrating a capacity to become a vibrant tourism asset. Beyond simply purchasing craft beverages, consumers desire to engage with these businesses through experiences at breweries, wineries, and distilleries (Taylor, DiPietro, Fung, Hudson, & Taylor, 2020). For some consumers, these experiences motivate their travel (Kline, Slocum, & Cavaliere, 2017) and are included among quality of life indicators (Reid & Gatrell, 2017).

The appeal of craft beverages and their related production experiences for both tourists and residents suggests that destination marketers could promote their local craft beverage scene to enhance the economic development benefits of both, the tourism and the craft beverage industries. Many destinations utilize craft beverage tourism (CBT) as a marketing strategy (Duarte Alonso & Alexander, 2017; Murray & Kline, 2015), yet, there has been limited examination of the foundations upon

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [wgnolle@ncsu.edu](mailto:wgnolle@ncsu.edu) (W. Knollenberg), [clgilarr@ncsu.edu](mailto:clgilarr@ncsu.edu) (C.G. Arroyo), [cebarbie@ncsu.edu](mailto:cebarbie@ncsu.edu) (C. Barbieri), [kaboys@ncsu.edu](mailto:kaboys@ncsu.edu) (K. Boys).

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which CBT is built (Gil Arroyo, Knollenberg, & Barbieri, 2021). Without information of how to establish CBT, the opportunities to leverage this niche tourism sector's potential economic development benefits, which includes tourism expenditures and attracting new residents, workforce members, and businesses, may be limited.

Previous research examining the resources necessary for tourism development have revealed the crucial role of social capital in creating a foundation for new tourism products. Drawing on Westlund and Adam (2010), Hughes and Boys (2015, p. 2) describe social capital as the "connections or networks among people and institutions—such as governments and nonprofits, and the formal and informal accepted social norms and values under which these connections operate". By way of example, Franken, Gómez, and Ross (2018) note the importance of social capital in supporting entrepreneurs attempting to establish wine operations in new regions. Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan (2006) recommend considering the effects of both, bridging and bonding social capital as they may generate different outcomes in community development. The potential economic development contribution of the craft beverage and tourism industries is augmented when social capital synergizes with tourism resources to create CBT. However, literature has noted the need for more information concerning how social capital lays the foundation for CBT and its economic development outcomes (Franken et al., 2018; Murray & Kline, 2015; Slocum, 2016; Xu, Barbieri, & Seekamp, 2020). In response, this study addresses the research question: how do bonding and bridging social capital contribute to the establishment of CBT and to its potential to foster economic development through the enrichment of community capacities? Answering this question will contribute to an understanding of the foundation of CBT, allowing tourism destination managers and marketers to advance the development of CBT products. This, in turn, will contribute to destination community residents' quality of life through improvements of local amenities.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Economic development through tourism

Feldman, Hadjimichael, Lanahan, and Kemeny (2016) conceptualize economic development as the "activities that expand capacities to realize the potential of individuals, firms, or communities who contribute to the advancement of society through the responsible production of goods and services" (p. 18). The authors outline four capacities related to this conceptualization: community, firm and industry, entrepreneurial activity, and innovative infrastructure (Table 1). Tourism has the potential to enrich these capacities when its development incorporates existing community assets (Wu & Tsai, 2016). For

**Table 1**  
Conceptualized community capacities and examples in CBT.

Capacity	Description	Example in CBT
Community	Physical, social, and environmental community assets.	Revitalization of urban areas through the development of beer districts.
Firm and industry	Workforce, facilities and equipment, and supply chain.	Availability of skilled and trained workforce specialized in distilling or management of beverage facilities.
Entrepreneurial activity	Networks, risk-taking culture, and access to financial capital and skilled workforce needed to start new businesses.	Emergence of financing options specific to small independent businesses.
Innovative infrastructure	Facilities and support services for supporting new products and organizations.	Development of new and specialized suppliers of materials used in craft beverage production including equipment and agricultural products

Source: Feldman et al. (2016).

example, tourism can increase the value of historic structures, thus promoting their preservation (Qun, Mitchell, & Wall, 2012), or can improve residents' and tourists' social well-being (Moscardo, Kononov, Murphy, McGehee, & Schurmann, 2017). Without incorporating existing capacities, tourism development efforts could have the opposite effect and lead a community to poverty (Koutra & Edwards, 2012). For instance, limited or lack of access to financial capital reduces the opportunity of small and micro-businesses to capitalize on the opportunities created by tourists.

To ensure that tourism advances economic development, physical, social, and environmental community assets must be managed with residents' quality of life in mind (Rivera, Croes, & Lee, 2016). Tourism improves residents' quality of life through both objective (e.g. increased availability of restaurants or events) and subjective (e.g. greater value placed on social and cultural resources) means (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013). Tourism can also amplify economic development by attracting new residents who may increase the local workforce and, in turn, increase firm and industry capacity, and entrepreneurial activity (Ghaderi, Aboali, & Henderson, 2018; Moscardo et al., 2017; Vuin, Carson, Carson, & Garrett, 2016).

Strong evidence supports the role of tourism in increasing resident quality of life and economic development. However, greater knowledge is needed to determine what forms of tourism hold the greatest potential for gaining the benefits of economic development (De Vita & Kyaw, 2017). In response, this study focuses on CBT contributions to economic development. More specifically, it identifies how CBT can foster economic development, which provides tourism development officials with important managerial intelligence to help ensure that tourism contributes to community capacities.

### 2.2. The craft beverage industry

A multitude of stakeholders comprises the craft beverage industry. Those who produce beer, wine, spirits, cider, mead, and other fermented drinks (Johnson & Lowry, 2017) on a small scale, as well stakeholders who support these producers, such as distributors, retailers, regulators (e.g. the United States Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau), and consumers, are all a part of the industry. The craft beverage industry is also entwined with other industries, such as agriculture through the production of raw materials (e.g. malt grains, hops, fruits), manufacturing (e.g. creation of machinery for fermentation and bottling), and tourism.

Despite the wide reach of the craft beverage industry, "craft" is its distinct definitional element. The level of production is often the metric used to define "craft" status beverage industry. For example, the craft threshold is six million barrels annually for beer (Brewer's Association, 2019b) and 750,000 gallons annually for spirits (American Craft Spirits Association, 2019). Others emphasize the ownership structure of craft beverage producers, either as maintaining independence from non-craft brewers (Brewer's Association, 2019b) or as holding at least 75% equity stake in their own company (American Craft Spirits Association, 2019). There is also consideration of social issues in defining craft beverage production, such as an emphasis on innovation and engagement with local communities (Brewer's Association, 2019b), and transparency in the production process (American Craft Spirits Association, 2019).

The expansion of the craft beverage industry has created important economic outcomes. In 2017 in the United States, 16,800 craft beverage (i.e. beer, wine, liqueurs, distilled spirits, cider, mead, and fermented drinks) producers created over \$31 billion in sales (Johnson & Lowry, 2017), which supported over 150,000 jobs in the beer and over 18,000 jobs in the spirits production segments (American Craft Spirits Association, 2018; Brewers Association, 2019). Furthermore, this industry demonstrates a sustained growth in terms of market share of craft beverages and active producers. For example, the American Craft Spirits Association (2018) reported that between 2017 and 2018 the number of active distillers increased by 15.5%. The growth of the craft beverage

market has provided a new approach to economic development and a suite of benefits for many communities, including those in rural areas (Hughes, 2018; Thares, 2018). These benefits include contributions to community capacities in the form of preserving and bringing new life to existing infrastructure (Reid, 2018), increasing property values (Nilsson & Reid, 2019), and creating appeal for those looking to relocate for work or entrepreneurial opportunities (Shepard, 2019).

### 2.3. Craft beverage tourism

A destination's culinary offerings are a primary pull factor for a majority (80%) of leisure travelers (World Food Travel Association, 2016). CBT is one such culinary offering that focuses on tasting, preparing, and learning about craft beverages (Kline et al., 2017) and connects consumers (travelers and local residents) to craft beverage producers and the environments in which these beverages are created (Slocum, 2016). CBT experiences could include following a beer trail (Slocum, 2016), participating in a wine grape harvest (Martin, Gonçalves, Branco, Barbosa, Melo, & Bessa, 2017), or taking a class with a craft distiller (Spracklen, 2011). Wine tourism has been the traditional form of CBT, and plays a crucial role in tourism development (Popp & McCole, 2016), cultural preservation (Xu, Barbieri, Anderson, Leung, & Rozier-Rich, 2016), and entrepreneurship (Franken et al., 2018), especially in rural areas. Wine tourism is still a vibrant segment of CBT, but there has been diversification into the creation of experiences that feature beer, spirits, and cider.

Although CBT has grown and diversified, there remains little information concerning what resources are needed to integrate the craft beverage and tourism industries (Gil Arroyo et al., 2021). Wine tourism led the way in merging craft beverage production and tourism, with Getz and Brown (2006) identifying that the wine product, destination appeal, and cultural product all play a role in attracting tourists to wine regions. Further research on wine tourism shows that experience creation, marketing and promotion, and events and festivals all build upon existing wine production operations to facilitate wine tourism (Gómez, Pratt, & Molina, 2019). Yet, wine tourism in emerging destinations falls short in extending its benefits to local residents (Xu et al., 2020). Such findings indicate that establishing a robust craft beverage industry is necessary to initiate the experiences and promotional efforts of CBT (Duarte Alonso & Alexander, 2017; Murray & Kline, 2015; Slocum, 2016). There is also evidence that human resources and other resources such as knowledgeable staff and agricultural products (Gil Arroyo et al., 2021; Murray & O'Neill, 2012; Gil; Woolverton & Parcell, 2008) play a crucial role in facilitating CBT development. It remains unclear, however, how these resources coalesce into a successful CBT industry which generates economic development benefits.

The literature consistently agrees on the necessity to integrate community stakeholders, notably residents, into effective CBT development efforts (Murray & Kline, 2015; Xu et al., 2016, 2020). While residents play a crucial role in community integration, other industry stakeholders must also be included. According to Lee, Seltzer, and Callison (2017), the key stakeholders of this industry are: craft beverage producers (e.g. breweries, wineries, distilleries) and retailers (e.g. bottle shops, bars, restaurants); information curators (e.g. destination marketing offices, cider trails, winery maps); event organizers (e.g. craft beer festivals); tourist service providers (e.g. tour leaders); associations (e.g. American Brewers Guild); and business support services (e.g. Chambers of Commerce). These stakeholder groups have the opportunity to work together to advance economic development and capacity-building efforts through CBT. However, little is known about the specific resources and actions these stakeholders need to facilitate CBT (Gil Arroyo et al., 2021).

### 2.4. Social capital

Community capitals, which include financial, human, built, natural, cultural, political, and social capital, have been conceptualized as the resources needed to foster economic development (Flora, 2016). Each form of capital contributes to a community's sustainable growth, thus economic development initiatives require a plan based on the unique mix of capitals that a community possesses (McGehee, Lee, O'Bannon, & Perdue, 2010; Souldard, Knollenberg, Boley, Perdue, & McGehee, 2018). Social capital is the capacity for individuals to gain benefits from their place in a social network or other social structures (Portes, 1998) and it enables or augments access to other capitals (Agnitsch et al., 2006; McGehee et al., 2010). Conversely, the absence or weakness of social networks can affect a community's ability to take advantage of economic development opportunities (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). The value of social capital lies in the connections made among community members through friendship and respect (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Social capital has been found to facilitate tourism entrepreneurs' success (Birendra, Morais, Seekamp, Smith, & Peterson, 2018), contribute to the development of novel tourism experiences (Moscardo et al., 2017), and advance tourism marketing campaigns (von Friedrichs Grängsjö & Gummesson, 2006). Social capital takes two forms. Bonding social capital includes the connections created between individuals within a homogenous group where members share similar characteristics, such as a professional or leisure activities (McGehee et al., 2010). Bonding social capital builds upon reciprocity among these members (Moscardo et al., 2017). In contrast, bridging social capital develops through connections among heterogeneous groups who share common goals (Taylor, 2017). These ties rely upon members' contribution of unique and complementary resources (Heimtun, 2007) which may be shaped by a variety of factors, including their geographic location (Rutten, Westlund, & Boekema, 2010). Although both forms of social capital contribute to a community's economic wealth, bridging social capital is particularly important because it catalyzes the development of bonding social capital and strengthens existing social networks (Zahra & McGehee, 2013).

Previous work suggests that bridging social capital plays a role in establishing regional CBT products. The establishment of a craft beer trail, for example, requires collaboration between producers and tourism sector entities such as lodging providers (Slocum, 2016). There is also evidence that bonding social capital, particularly between craft beverage entrepreneurs and local residents, is vital to establishing CBT (Duarte Alonso & Alexander, 2017; Xu et al., 2020). Thus, social capital is vital to develop sustainable tourism efforts (McGehee et al., 2010) and may play an important role in establishing CBT and laying the foundation for its contributions to economic development (Xu et al., 2020). However, more precision in identifying the role of both bridging and bonding social capital in CBT development is needed to ensure that it can fully realize its potential for economic development.

## 3. Materials and methods

### 3.1. Study site

Wake County in North Carolina (United States) serves as the study location. Wake County covers 857 square miles and contains the state capital, Raleigh, as well as eleven other municipalities. As of July 2019 the county's population was estimated to be 1,111,761, reflecting a growth rate of 23.4% since 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Wake County's primary industries include technology, pharmaceuticals, education, and health care (Wake County Economic Development, 2019). The continued growth of these industries requires a highly skilled workforce, established infrastructure, and investment in entrepreneurial

initiatives. Wake County has also seen growth in its tourism industry, which generated \$2.27 billion in expenditures in 2017 reflecting a 4.36% increase from 2016 (VisitNC, 2019).

In 2019 Wake County’s destination marketing organization, the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB), finalized a strategic plan which highlighted opportunities for CBT development (Wake County DSP, 2019). The potential for CBT to act as an economic driver is feasible due to the growth of this county’s craft beverage industry. At the time of data collection (Fall 2018), Wake County was home to over 40 craft beverage producers and an array of many other CBT stakeholders. The area also benefits from a wide range of tourism stakeholders including multiple transportation access points (e.g. an international airport, train station), a diverse lodging inventory, a mix of local and nationally-owned restaurants, and a mosaic of cultural, leisure, and sports offerings that could complement the CBT product. The combination of these resources has helped establish CBT elsewhere in North Carolina most notably Asheville, which is widely recognized as a destination for craft beverage enthusiasts (Baginski & Bell, 2011; Strom & Kerstein, 2015). The mix of craft beverage and tourism assets (e.g. producers, infrastructure) offers the potential for Wake County to become a successful CBT destination and makes it an instructive location to study the foundations of CBT development.

3.2. Methods

Given the limited information available on the resources needed to establish CBT, we utilized qualitative methods of inquiry to capture a nuanced understanding of the ways social capital contributes to CBT development. An interpretivist paradigm frames the research process of data collection and analysis to allow the expression of both the participants’ and researchers’ knowledge (Bailey, 2018). Multiple criteria were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). We ensured the transferability of the findings by applying purposive sampling and participant triangulation. Prolonged engagement with the study setting as well as participation and peer debriefing of multiple investigators provided data credibility and dependability of the findings. The use of an audit trail along the research process ensured confirmability of findings.

Purposive sampling was used to maximize the representation of each CBT stakeholder group and Wake County community in the study sample. A CBT stakeholder was defined in this study as any organization that impacted or was impacted by the development of craft beverage tourism in Wake County. Members of these stakeholder groups were identified through a through a systematic online search using key words such as brewery, distillery, chamber of commerce; through this process, 114 Wake County CBT stakeholders were identified. These organizations were then assigned to one of seven categories based upon their industry

**Table 2**  
Summary of craft beverage industry stakeholder groups and study participants.

Stakeholder group	Example	Study sample	Population <sup>a</sup>
		n	N
Craft beverage producers	Brewers, distillers	10 <sup>b</sup>	50
Association representatives	Distiller’s association	3	5
Information curators	Visitor bureaus	3	3
Business support organizations	Chambers of Commerce, education providers	3	13
Event organizers	Craft beer festival hosts	2	3
Retail businesses	Bottle shops	5 <sup>b</sup>	60
Tourist service providers	Craft beer tour leaders	4 <sup>b</sup>	4

<sup>a</sup> Population numbers were developed based on an extensive internet search.

<sup>b</sup> Indicates that more than one individual per business or organization was interviewed.

role (Table 2), such as association representatives (i.e. organizations representing a collective professional interest such as a brewer’s associations), business support organizations (i.e. non-profit non-governmental organizations providing resources for business owners), and information curators (i.e. both quasi-governmental and private organizations who provide information about CBT). Seeking to have an equitable distribution across communities and stakeholder category, the sample frame was reduced to 73 stakeholders who were invited via email to participate in the study. Ultimately, 30 CBT stakeholders agreed to participate in the study resulting in 24 semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were approximately 1 h in length. The participants represent a range of administrative units (e.g. state, county, city), and seven of the twelve communities within Wake County.

A separate interview protocol was developed for each stakeholder group to elicit participant’s perceptions of assets supporting the establishment of a craft beverage enterprise and CBT. All protocols included questions about how stakeholders got involved in the craft beverage industry, their current role in the industry, how they contribute to the county’s CBT product, and the impacts their organization or other stakeholders have on their surrounding communities. Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted at a location of the participant’s choice. NVivo11 was used to organize the thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews. Thematic analysis began with open coding to allow themes in the data to emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Axial coding was then used to organize these themes based upon their association with the economic development outcomes identified by Feldman et al. (2016), bonding social capital as defined by McGehee et al. (2010), and bridging social capital as defined by Taylor (2017).

4. Findings

The thematic analysis of the data provided evidence of a strong relationship between CBT development and economic development. Four themes (axial codes) were identified related to capacity for economic development (Table 1), which were supported by multiple sub-themes (open codes). It also identified four themes (axial codes), which were supported by subthemes (open codes), related to the role of social capital in CBT development (Table 3).

4.1. Capacity for economic development

Study findings provide evidence of the contribution of CBT to the economic development of Wake County by building and strengthening its capacities. Specifically, economic development themes related to (1) community capacity, (2) firm and industry capacity, (3) entrepreneurial activity, and (4) innovative infrastructure (Feldman et al., 2016), were identified.

4.1.1. Community capacity

The development of CBT in Wake County contributes to the vitality and growth of urban areas. For example, the proliferation of clusters of breweries and taprooms boosts the appeal of neighborhoods and business districts, and attracts more visitors as well as new businesses and

**Table 3**  
Emergent themes on capacity for economic development and social capital.

Capacity for economic development themes	
1. Community capacity	
2. Firm and industry capacity	
3. Entrepreneurial activity	
4. Innovative infrastructure	
Social capital themes	
1. Collaboration among stakeholders	Type of Social Capital
2. Support for new members of the industry	Bridging and bonding
3. Involvement with the community	Bridging
4. Creation of a craft beverage destination	Bridging and bonding

residents. Producer 4 describes it as follows:

“Having worked there and having seen just the businesses pop around us. I know that [producer] specifically has helped pull people and pull attention into that area and into that space and brought more business around it.”

This revitalization also encourages investment from local governments, who are aware of the potential for growth sparked by these new craft beverage-related businesses. Towns within Wake County support the development of beer districts or other craft beverage areas by improving public spaces surrounding these sites.

“There’s a lot of places down there that were vacant for a while since we’ve moved in and our next-door neighbors moved in. Now, they’re revitalizing one of the parks nearby us. They’re putting in a town heritage museum across the street from us. They’re doing some investment in the area. Some of it they’ve relied upon us to make that investment, but the town’s always been very supportive of us.”

This quote from Producer 2 illustrates the establishment of the brewery increased community capacity in the form of physical space (e.g. vacant spaces being developed), as well as social and environmental assets (e.g. creation of park space and a heritage museum).

#### 4.1.2. Firm and industry capacity

In Wake County, the emergence of new craft beverage businesses creates demand for a workforce skilled in the production of craft beverages and frontline staff who can share knowledge with customers about the production, styles, and history of craft beverages. Producers invest in the development of this workforce through on-the-job training or supporting employees to gain relevant industry certifications such as Certified Cicerone®, the industry standard for “significant knowledge and professional skills in beer sales and service” (Cicerone, n.d.). A craft beverage producer describes how their manager invests in employees:

“He is very adamant about the whole staff being educated and having really strong [knowledge] through at least a section of the Cicerone program. Whether it be just the entry-level. Almost all the bartenders are at least beer-server certified. Everybody in the back is at least standard Cicerone Certified Level 2.” (Producer 10)

This investment in workforce development creates value for those employed in the industry and a pool of workers versed in the fundamentals of craft beverage production and service. There are also efforts to offer more comprehensive formal training through local community colleges. Educator 1 explains the value of a technical degree in Craft Beer Brewing: “Look how many brewers we’ve added in the last few years. All those are positions that are needing to be filled as well.” This existing formal education opportunity further enhances the skills of the growing craft beverage workforce in Wake County and contributes to the advancement of this industry.

There is additional evidence that CBT helps to drive firm and industry capacity because the growth of new craft beverage operations results in greater demand for brewing equipment and infrastructure and beverage production supplies (e.g. raw ingredients such as malt or hops). Within Wake County the demand for equipment and facilities for craft beverage production is high as Producer 1 notes: “... the resale value on brewing equipment is so high. It’s crazy because people want brewing equipment. We’re on 16 websites today, looking at brewing equipment.” Producer 1 also indicated that craft beverage producers can be a source of demand within local supply chains, especially for locally grown products that can make their beverages stand out: “We do our best to work with local farmers to get the best, freshest ingredients while on a rotating menu where we’re constantly evolving.” This finding suggests that CBT can help support local supply chains, maximizing the economic impact of these operations.

#### 4.1.3. Entrepreneurial activity

Despite its potential, financing constraints hamper growth of the beverage industry. As Producer 1 notes: “Breweries are the second least popular thing for banks to fund.” Participants also identify the need for sizable investments to develop production facilities, even though they are considered small businesses. For instance, Association 3 shares: “It takes a lot of money to build a distillery and it takes a lot of money to run a distillery for years until you get enough product.” According to Wylie (2018), the cost of brewery equipment for small operations averages \$100,000. Such investments yield slow return rates, and businesses can take years to establish themselves. These characteristics make banks and other financial entities hesitant to offer start-up loans to craft beverage businesses. In the words of a craft beverage retailer:

“The biggest challenge that I see for small-business owners or people that are just getting started – funding. It’s expensive to get started. It takes a while to get over that initial hump. Banks are hesitant to make that kind of investment.” (Retailer 1)

This analysis did not find direct evidence of risk-taking culture contributing to the growth of craft beverage industry. Craft beverage producers included in this study reported that bank financing is difficult to obtain, yet these business owners were willing to take on the risk and fund their operations through more creative means.

#### 4.1.4. Innovative infrastructure

In addition to promoting the emergence of new production facilities and retail spaces, CBT also creates opportunities for other industries to become suppliers and offer complementary services. The large number of breweries in Wake County has inspired the development of information services that are shared with potential visitors within and outside the county, such as brewery maps and podcasts focused on local food and beverages. Information Curator 2 comments:

“We thought we were doing a service for everyone inside of North Carolina about North Carolina, but we find that many people are in our same category [transplants], and listen to our show, so they can understand the place they’re either being transferred to, or they’re vacationing.”

New business establishments offering services specific to the craft beverage industry are becoming more prevalent in Wake County. For instance, there is a growing number of tourist service providers that exclusively offer craft beverage experiences (e.g. brewery tasting tours), develop themed routes (e.g. distillery routes), or organize festivals highlighting North Carolina’s craft beverages. CBT can thus foster the development of innovative infrastructure and services that draw visitors (and potential residents) to an area whose direct spending and tax revenue generation can advance economic development.

Together these findings reveal that the development of a craft beverage industry and subsequent CBT contributes to economic development benefits to Wake County and local communities. Reaping these benefits, however, requires a greater understanding of the bridging and bonding community capitals that support the development of the craft beverage and CBT industries, which is explored in the following analysis.

#### 4.2. Social capital

Several social capital themes that emerged from the interviews that demonstrate the relevance of bridging and bonding social capital in CBT development. The key social capital themes study that participants emphasized are: (1) collaboration among stakeholders, (2) support for new members of the industry, (3) involvement with the community, and (4) creation of a craft beverage destination.

#### 4.2.1. Collaboration among stakeholders

Collaboration among craft beverage stakeholders has created considerable benefits for Wake County's craft beverage industry. Such collaboration relies upon both bonding and bridging social capital. Specifically, findings indicate that bonding social capital facilitates collaboration among stakeholders within the same group (e.g. Wake County craft beverage producers). Bonding social capital is widely present and actively cultivated by Wake County's craft beverage industry. The resulting collaboration among similar stakeholders is a major contributor to the industry's growth. Industry stakeholders indicate they have developed a focus on collaboration as opposed to competition: "It's a very artistic community, which is why I think you see so much collaboration between brewers. They're obviously in competition with each other, but they want to see each other succeed as well" (Business Support Organization 1). Collaboration may even come at a cost for some producers, suggesting that bonding social capital is greatly valued within the craft beverage industry: "It's easier to get hops last minute from any other brewery in town than to order it. Even if we're two pounds short someone will run it over to us, which is amazing" (Producer 3). Collectively these quotes provide evidence that collaboration, facilitated by social capital, is a crucial foundation to Wake County's craft beverage industry. Such findings suggest that efforts to foster collaboration can go a long way in helping to establish CBT. The importance of collaboration reflects findings from outside of the CBT context (Carrigan, Lazell, Bosangit, & Magrinos, 2017; Czernek & Czakon, 2016) and indicates that collaboration is crucial among tourism stakeholders to establish a unified approach to tourism development.

Bridging social capital fosters collaboration among stakeholders who hold similar goals, but are in different geographic locations or collaboration across different stakeholder groups (e.g. business support organizations assisting producers) within Wake County. Producers also cultivate bridging social capital in collaborating with producers outside of Wake County. Producer 1 describes how this extends the visibility of their product:

"When a brewery is interested in coming to Wake County or North Carolina, or we go out to Denver and we meet a great brewery, we reach out to those guys and say, 'Hey, we'd love to brew a collaboration beer. Can I help coordinate getting our beer there and your beer back our way?'"

Bridging social capital also facilitates collaboration by bringing together different stakeholders, especially to overcome challenges or limit costs. This is commonly seen through the exchange of resources or expertise by members of different stakeholder groups. Producer 3 describes an example of this collaboration with a variety of local and national organizations:

"Our set of helpful partners is probably not standard, but I think a lot of what's driven our success is Downtown Raleigh, the GRCVB [Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau], our connection with the James Beard Foundation, and then small partnerships with the art museum and CAM, and those networks. All of those people act like brand advocates for us."

Although data indicate that producers most frequently initiate such collaborations, other stakeholder groups also engage in collaborative efforts. As Business Support Organization 2 stated: "*We try to help [the producers] every step of the way, whether it's connecting them with sources for financing, helping to get their name out, helping them find opportunities to do sampling events.*" Collaboration among a variety of stakeholders contributes to sustaining the craft beverage industry as a whole. By way of example, the GRCVB hosted meetings with local craft beverage producers to foster discussions about marketing and development opportunities. Information Curator 2 highlights the impact of this event: "The brewers, I will say they're dedicated enough [that] they come out to our

beer summits. They've attended, they've been enthusiastic." However, it is worth noting that aside from Producer 3's identification of the GRCVB as a partner, scant evidence emerged from the data analysis supporting the development of partnerships between craft beverage stakeholder groups with their local destination marketing organization.

#### 4.2.2. Support for new members of the industry

Data analysis also indicates that stakeholders support industry newcomers by providing equipment loans, mentorship, and other help in establishing new operations. Such efforts are vital to ensure that Wake County's craft beverage industry continues to grow. What distinguishes support for new members from general collaboration among stakeholders is that these actions are undertaken with no expectation of reciprocity from the new industry member. This type of support generally is in the form of bonding social capital which offers assistance within the same stakeholder group, but can also include bridging social capital where support is provided from outside of the receiving member's stakeholder group (e.g. business support organizations or event organizers). Several producers exemplify how bonding social capital facilitates support for new producers:

"We called [the other brewers] probably six times a day for the first year, and just asked, 'What do you guys do in this situation?' They were always just kind and open. All of them, they were really wonderful at helping us." (Producer 3)

Tourist Service Provider 1 shares a story of a new brewery that struggled to open and could not initially sell their beer:

"With [the new brewery], when word got out what had happened to them, [established breweries] just started bringing beer to them, [they'd say] 'Put this on your tap and sell it. Just put this on your tap and sell it and keep the money.'"

This anecdote illustrates the support that established producers gave to new members of their stakeholder group, at a cost to themselves, but without expectation of reciprocity from the new producer. This is particularly noteworthy because all stakeholders perceive new business formation as an important aspect of sustaining and strengthening this industry.

Bridging social capital also plays a crucial role in supporting new industry members. Relationships with other stakeholder group members can help leverage resources (e.g. sharing business plan expertise) and create opportunities (e.g. access to funding) for new industry members. Event organizers illustrate how they shared their resources such as access to potential new consumers at a craft beer festival to support the establishment of new producers:

"We gave [the new producer] some extra permission ... when we were trying to help them launch. As a new brewery that small, you're competing with those other people, [being at the festival] gives them that advantage and opportunity to get their name out." (Event Organizer 1)

Business Support Organization 1 describes a competition to develop and pitch a new entrepreneurial venture, which advances their mission of cultivating new businesses while providing new producers with the opportunity to obtain funding and business plan support:

"It is an annual event that we have some classes to prepare potential entrepreneurs. We take a full weekend. We are open 24/7. They work on everything from their business plan to their financials, and then they actually pitch in front of a panel of judges."

In addition, Business Support Organization 1 reported that this event allowed them to develop relationships with the participating producers. This indicates the event successfully established bridging social capital between these two stakeholder groups.

#### 4.2.3. Involvement with the community

Bridging social capital is also evident through craft beverage industry members' efforts to connect with their local and non-local consumers (without distinguishing between local and non-local patrons) and the residents of Wake County. Patronage of one segment of the craft beverage industry can indirectly generate support for other industry segments: "When people start drinking craft beer and they decide they like it better, they might be more prone to try craft spirits when they go buy spirits" (Producer 8). By providing information to consumers, other stakeholders also strengthen Wake County's craft beverage industry. For example, tourist service providers cultivate bridging social capital by educating new craft beverage consumers about the industry and its products. Tourist Service Provider 2 explains how they help consumers connect with new craft beer products:

"We know quite a bit about each place we go to, as far as what they have to offer. We can steer people in the right direction. I ask a lot 'What type of beer do you like?' We steer them in the right direction and usually, they're pretty happy with the beer that we suggest."

Fostering a strong connection with residents and other Wake County businesses is important because these community members can support efforts to establish or expand the craft beverage industry. Producers and tourist service providers can foster connections by offering space for special interest group meetings, donating to community causes, and hosting public events such as concerts, food truck rodeos, and recreational activities. Business Support Organization 1 explains how a local craft beverage producer has built strong relationships with local non-profits who are allowed to use the producers' facilities for events: "It means so much to non-profits that can't afford to rent space for events. That's been a big help, but they also sponsor just about every event in [our community]." Producers' support of local events further demonstrates their commitment to being involved in their community.

#### 4.2.4. Creation of a craft beverage destination

In Wake County, there is ample evidence of social capital supporting the craft beverage industry's establishment and growth. There is also evidence that this community continues to leverage social capital to establish itself as a CBT destination. Wake County craft beverage producers recognize the value of creating quality products, as these products are vital to promoting the whole county as a CBT destination. Producer 1 highlights how bonding social capital (collaboration between producers) and bridging social capital (collaboration with tourist service providers) can generate benefits for all stakeholders of Wake County: "The beer tours ... also helped pull people out to [our community] as well as those who come into town, from out of town, and just want to hit breweries and drink as many different beers as they can." This quote illustrates how partnerships between tourist service providers (e.g. beer tours) and producers allow tourists to experience multiple communities in the county and the craft beverages those communities have to offer. When social capital is formed between these stakeholder groups, it contributes to the growth of CBT.

Once the craft beverage industry is established, a CBT destination must effectively market itself. While there was limited evidence of craft beverage stakeholder groups initiating partnerships with the GRCVB, there were strategic efforts by the GRCVB to connect the industry with potential tourists. As Information Curator 2 noted:

"Craft beer tourism has been a big part of what we do just because the industry in Wake County has had potential over the years, if not to attract tourism to Wake County, to provide one more big reason for people to come here and an activity for people that are visiting."

The GRCVB promotes the CBT experiences in Wake County through the creation of a Beer Trail featuring a passport program for visitors to earn prizes for visiting multiple craft beverage producers. Analysis reveals that in Wake County bridging social capital supports the creation

of a CBT destination by unifying multiple stakeholder groups around the common goal of attracting tourists to the destination. Collaboration among event organizers, producers, and the GRCVB has resulted in successfully establishing Wake County as a CBT destination, which has led to multiple benefits:

"We've found now that people come from 44 states to come to this event. For us, we see this now as an economic impact driver. Not only with beer sales but it also brings people into our area for the event" (Event Organizer 1).

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

As more tourism destinations across the United States seek to establish CBT, knowledge of how this form of niche tourism relies upon and generates community resources is of great value. This study advances such knowledge by focusing on the role of social capital in the development of CBT and investigates how this sector contributes to economic development. Using Wake County in North Carolina as a case example, this study reveals the critical role that bridging and bonding social capital play in the development of CBT. Furthermore, findings indicate the opportunity for CBT to contribute to community capacity, firm and industry capacity, entrepreneurial activity, and innovative infrastructure. Findings of this study offer novel insights into the craft beverage industry and the community development opportunities CBT offers, and are likely to be of interest to those engaged in the craft beverage industry and those working in community economic development efforts.

Overall, this study's findings confirm that social capital is critical to establishing and enhancing the sustainable development of the craft beverage industry (Franken et al., 2018; Gil Arroyo, 2021; Xu et al., 2020) and vital for tourism development (McGehee et al., 2010). As with other CBT destinations, the success of Wake County as a CBT destination relies upon a robust and sustainable craft beverage industry. This aligns with existing evidence supporting that the craft beverage industry precedes or occurs concurrently with the development of a CBT destination (Murray & Kline, 2015; Slocum, 2016). This study reveals that once a craft beverage industry has been established, craft beverage stakeholders can commit resources to create a CBT destination, which help to amplify and diversify the economic development benefits of the craft beverage industry.

This study advances knowledge of the role of social capital in the development of the craft beverage and CBT industries by identifying specific bridging and bonding actions that both industries' stakeholders can use to facilitate their mutual success. These actions include collaborations within and across stakeholders, support for new industry members, involvement in the community, and creation of a destination. By identifying these actions, this study builds upon the knowledge of the resources that can be used to sustain a community's craft beverage industry (Franken et al., 2018) and CBT (Gil Arroyo et al., 2021; Murray & Kline, 2015; Slocum, 2016; Xu et al., 2020) which, in turn, can generate desirable economic development outcomes.

Bonding social capital in Wake County, particularly among producers, plays a major role in CBT development. Craft beverage stakeholders see great benefit in fostering bonding social capital, actively seek to strengthen their relationships with those who are similar to them. The relatively limited establishment of bridging social capital among the different stakeholder groups in Wake County is a potential constraint to CBT's growth and economic impact (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). These findings suggest that there is a need to encourage greater understanding of the value of bridging social capital among Wake County's CBT stakeholders. This may be particularly important to help CBT stakeholders, namely craft beverage producers, obtain the financing needed to establish themselves. Evidence from this study shows the crucial role that different types of CBT stakeholders, such as business support

organizations, play in helping producers overcome the hurdle of obtaining financing. Additionally, industry leaders need to identify mechanisms to further encourage development of bridging social capital among CBT stakeholders. Such leadership could come from destination marketing organizations and tourist service providers who could cultivate opportunities to build bridges among external constituents (e.g. counterparts in nearby regions) to strengthen CBT and foster reciprocal economic development.

The growth of CBT in Wake County facilitates its economic development by using and strengthening community capacities based on economic resources, and social and cultural amenities. Such development improves residents' quality of life and increases the county's attractiveness for new businesses, new residents, and visitors. Further research is needed to measure the effectiveness of strategies craft beverage businesses use to achieve sustained success, and to what extent and in what ways these strategies translate into quantifiable development impacts, both economic (e.g. job creation) and non-economic (e.g. beautification of public spaces).

The qualitative nature of the study provides a rich understanding of the CBT context in Wake County. Study findings are transferable to other destinations or communities with similar characteristics. However, it will be necessary to use quantitative research approaches when examining CBT development strategies in other destinations to generalize findings. Such an approach would be useful to assess the resources required to implement successful CBT development strategies and their potential contributions to economic development.

#### Declaration of competing interest

None.

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