'Responsible drinkers create all the atmosphere of a mortuary': Policy implementation of responsible drinking in Scotland

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Abstract

Purpose

Explores the reaction of customer facing staff and their attitude to the introduction of high profile CSR programmes; in particular their level of awareness and willingness to implement them.

Design/methodology/approach

Conducted using a series of site visits and interviews with managers working within the licensed trade, this was followed up with structured interviews of ‘front line’ staff.

Findings

Despite high levels of awareness of both the social problems relating to alcohol consumption and the legislative changes, engagement with operational CSR was limited and often disinterested. Legal and societal expectations regarding drunkenness are of little concern.

Research limitations/implications

Concerned with nascent legislation, the full impact and success of which has not yet emerged. Reviewing this study in five years would add to the strength of the results. Limited to Scotland due to its devolved licensing laws, however, it clearly highlights lack of employee engagement with CSR.

Practical implications

Despite placing CSR issues at the forefront of day to day operations within the licensed trade there is little empirical evidence around customer facing staff engagement. CSR is a dynamic process that relies on the involvement of employees for its successful implementation,

Social implications

The social and economic cost of excessive alcohol consumption is high on the political agenda in Scotland. The commercial hospitality industry could, through a proactive and comprehensive implementation of CSR policies, play a significant role in in addressing societal concerns.

Originality/value

A new CSR implementation matrix is presented which allows hospitality businesses to be positioned according to levels of both management and employee engagement with CSR policies.

Key Words

CSR; Employee Attitudes; Alcoholic Drinks; Engagement
‘Responsible drinkers create all the atmosphere of a mortuary’: Policy implementation of responsible drinking in Scotland

Within the hospitality industry selling alcohol and creating an atmosphere raises issues of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This paper explores the reaction of customer facing staff and their attitude to the introduction of high profile CSR programmes; in particular their level of awareness and willingness to implement policies and practices. The bill for the ‘Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005’ of the Scottish Parliament received Royal Assent in December 2005 and came into force in September 2009 (Scottish Government, 2007). This Act makes provision for regulating the sale of alcohol, and for regulating licensed premises and other premises on which alcohol is sold. It imposes stricter regulations on the sale of alcohol and training standards for all bar staff, requiring them to refuse to serve drunken customers and to only honour responsible drinks orders. This also gave rise to high profile, legally enforceable, CSR campaigns promoted by the National Health Service in Scotland including ‘Drinkaware’ and ‘Alcohol Focus Scotland.’

This paper divides into six sections. The literature on organizational applications of CSR, and in particular CSR in the hospitality and tourism industry, is reviewed in section one. We identify limitations in the existing literature, specifically the lack of investigation into the introduction and implementation of a high profile legally enforceable CSR campaign. The second section explores CSR, alcohol consumption and the introduction of the ‘Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005’. There follows a section on data collection methods and analysis. The next two sections are empirical. In the first we explore how customer facing restaurant and bar staff cope with the implementation of high profile CSR initiatives and whether it is perceived possible to implement them without adversely affecting the core aim of the business. In the next section our results highlight the void between the legislative intentions and business interests as perceived by staff and the significant problems this raises for both implementation and maturation of any CSR initiatives. In the final section of the paper, we draw together the threads of our argument, offer a new CSR implementation matrix, consider the limitations of our approach and point to avenues for future research.

Applications of CSR and the Commercial Hospitality Industry
CSR has its foundations in the tradition that businesses form part of society (Carroll, 1979), this imposes “economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations” on businesses. Jones et al. (2006, p. 330) observe that businesses “have the potential to make a positive contribution to social goals and aspirations”. For this study, the definition by Kang et al., (2010, p. 76) is adopted: “the activities making companies good citizens who contribute to society’s welfare beyond their own self-interests.”
Organizations use CSR in an attempt to gain corporate legitimacy and address the concerns of both society in a variety of ways (McWilliams et al, 2006) e.g. PR campaigns (Frankental, 2001), risk management (Husted, 2005), and social legitimacy (Werther, 2005). Corporate legitimacy is seen as the ‘yardstick’ for CSR effectiveness (Carroll, 1979; Maignan & Ferrell, 2000; Wartick & Cochran, 1985), where legitimacy is “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). If, as Drucker (1973, p. 368) suggests, the minimum criterion of CSR is “primum non nocere” there are certain companies and even industries that may not be able to comply and increase corporate legitimacy through CSR.

Certain industries and traditional CSR are inherently contradictory. Both tobacco and liquor are described by Carroll (Carroll 1991) as amoral contexts due to the potential for negative outcomes from consumption. Hirschhorn (2004) suggests that marketing tobacco is ‘antithetical to social responsibility and that in the context of tobacco CSR is an oxymoron. Palazzo and Richter (2005, p. 398) observe that “as cigarettes kill active and passive users, all that a tobacco company can achieve is a reputation for transactional integrity”. However, transactional integrity is only a small part of legitimizing a corporation’s activities, as Weaver et al (1999) note societal acceptance is the main driving force of CSR activities. Within corporations there are also internal and external challenges in implementing CSR. For example, Pomering and Dolnicar (2009) argue that CSR has not yet demonstrated to be effective in improving customer attitudes towards products and services. Inside organisations Bondy (2008) discovered, when implementing CSR policies, individual employees’ personal ethics can lead to conflict between personal power and CSR objectives, resulting in their almost complete inactivity on CSR. Finally, Rondinelli (2002) observes that without independent moderation and control combined with genuine transparency, it is often business as usual that takes place.

Given strong evidence of positive relationships between CSR and financial performance (Tsai et al. 2011) it is perhaps not surprising that, at the corporate level, the commercial hospitality industry appears to be proactive in encouraging and implementing CSR initiatives; studies highlight compliance and initiatives in sectors including hotels (Holcomb, et al., 2007; Lee and Park, 2009) and theme parks (Holcomb et al. 2010). However, what remains unclear is just how involved and engaged the employees are; despite evidence that potential employees may judge firms on CSR efforts (Davidson et al. 2011). Despite corporate level adherence, CSR practices at unit level may be scant, for example, Jones et al (2006, p. 339) show “there is little evidence that pub operators are fully integrating CSR into their business ... or compare their CSR performance over time or within their sector of the economy”. This limited engagement is confirmed by Dodds and Kuehnel, (2010) who note a high level of awareness amongst Canadian tour operators, but little direct action, and Lee and Park (2009) found a significant difference between sectors in the industry when implementing CSR, with particular challenges for ‘socially aware’ casinos. The management of customers with regard to alcohol consumption was seen as crucial by Rundle-Thiele (2009) who observes in her study of Australian drinkers that there was a need to alter ‘serving-practices’ due to a lack of knowledge of responsible drinking amongst participants.
Holcomb et al. (2007, p.472) propose that for “most of the hotel and hospitality industry, the reality has not hit” compared to the CSR practices of other industries and call for a new approach within the industry. The commercial hospitality industry is encouraged to invest in the long term through more sustainable business practices and “live up to their reputation of being ‘hospitable’ not only to their guests but also to society”. Existing CSR research in the hospitality industry reveals few studies that focus on the engagement with socially responsible principles of doing business. Indeed, the extent to which CSR strategies should remain normative for all organisations is unclear when the fundamental nature of particular sectors may affect its desirability (Harrington and Ottenbacher 2011; Smith 2003). In many ways therefore, current research falls short of making a truly valuable contribution to the broader CSR literature as it lacks exploration of attitudes that underpin engagement. Despite evidence of some increase in the number of papers exploring CSR (Yoo et al, 2011) the focus of the extant literature remains on the ‘what’ as opposed to the ‘why’ and opportunity to explore engagement with CSR rather than its simple presence is apparent.

**CSR and Alcohol Consumption in Scotland**

In Scotland, the social and economic cost of excessive alcohol consumption is high on the political agenda, not least because it costs the country £1.1bn per year in: health service costs, social work, criminal justice, emergency services and other economic and social channels compensating for disruption (Alcohol Focus Scotland, 2007). One of the aims of the ‘Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005’ is protecting and improving public health. Mandatory requirements contained within the Act require that alcohol can only be sold in accordance with an approved operating plan, licence fees are paid and that alcohol cannot be sold without a premises licence or personal licence holder present. Alcohol can only be sold by staff who have the mandated CSR training; proof of training must be kept on premises. Price changes and special offers can only be made 72 hours after the last change and promotions considered to be irresponsible, for example, ‘2 for 1’ or ‘Happy Hours’ are prohibited. All licenced premises are required to provide soft drinks at affordable prices and drinking water free of charge (Scottish Government, 2007). In order to enforce the Act, Licensing Standards Officers have been appointed who are responsible for maintaining licensing law throughout Scotland and are granted considerable power through their office.

In parallel and in direct support of the Act, Alcohol Focus Scotland (2010) offer a series of CSR related training and education activities for employees. These are designed to standardise knowledge of irresponsible alcohol consumption in customers and a legal requirement in the sale of alcohol. Training seeks to encourage and stimulate societal responsibility in alcohol consumption by promoting awareness beyond the individual and is further developed by government backed PR campaigns (Drink Aware, 2010).
CSR and Frontline Employees

It is the stakeholder, rather than the shareholder, view of CSR that is explored in this study (Bolton, Chung-hee, & O’Gorman, 2011; Clarkson, 1995; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Ferrary, 2009); in particular issues of employee involvement and well-being (Vuontisjärvi, 2006) and their commitment and motivation (Farrelly & Greyser, 2007). Employer-employee relations are linked to business success (Karnes, 2009) and CSR has a strong influence on attitudes to work, these include: motivation and morale (Branco & Rodrigues, 2006), job satisfaction, organizational commitment and loyalty to the firm (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Tsai & Huang, 2008). Frontline employees, both managers and staff, are central to any successful implementation of CSR as it is “a dynamic and developing process that relies on the involvement of the employee as a major stakeholder in its co-creation and implementation” (Bolton et al 2011). Without employee engagement there is little chance of CSR being embedded in company practice and the resultant increased legitimacy being achieved. Furthermore, Bolton et al. (2011) highlight that companies depend on employees’ engagement with CSR throughout the process of initiation → implementation → maturation, frontline involvement grows from a minor element in the CSR initiation stage to a vital factor of success in the later stages of the process.

Methodology

To examine the level of awareness and implementation of CSR policies and practices by front-line staff in the Scottish licensed trade sector a field study was conducted which adopted a two-stage process to gather the data from both managerial/supervisory personnel and other bar staff. The initial round of data collection consisted of semi-structured face to face interviews with supervisory level staff. After the initial period of data analysis a further round of structured email interviews were undertaken with front-line bar staff.

Phase one data was collected in Glasgow using a purposive sampling exercise within the Glasgow City licensing board area. From the some 1750 outlets which hold a premises license a sample was sought which was representative of both independent and chain affiliated establishments with managers interviewed from bars, hotels and nightclubs. Initial emails and telephone calls were made to over 150 premises in the city centre area based on and from these a final sample of 29 face-to-face interviews with bar supervisors and managers were arranged. All participants had at least 1 year experience in a management role.

To ensure interview consistency a schedule was created (Yin, 2003) to stimulate discussion around CSR awareness, practices and implementation questions focused in on participant’s attitudes towards binge drinking as this was seen as precipitating CSR elements of the act. Participants were then questioned on the extent to which problems can be controlled by front line staff and then on their responsibilities towards both customers and staff. Finally, participants were asked to suggest
ways in which CSR practices might impact on day to day activity. All face-to-face interviews were recorded and lasted between 30 – 45 minutes in length.

Phase two data was conducted with undergraduate students studying hospitality and tourism management. An online survey consisting of 12 open and closed questions was sent using the online survey tool Qualtrics to 416 students, after two reminder emails a total of 135 students responded. Respondents were initially filtered on whether they had worked in hospitality; the final sample of 64 represents 15% of the original sample. The use of an open question survey was used to gain access to a larger sample of hospitality employees and allowed respondents to answer in their own words. This approach can result in unexpected answers and is seen as often reflecting the legitimate views of a respondent (O’Connor and Baum, 2008). Of this sub-sample 37% had worked for more than 1 year and 18% had worked for between 3 and 5 years. Respondents had undertaken a range of roles from bar staff (34%), waiter (47%), events (8%) and nightclub staff (7%); 59% of the respondents were aware of Corporate Social Responsibility in the licensed trade. Only 49% of respondents reported receiving formal training and of this group only nine respondents had received licensing act training. Open questions were formulated which explored respondents: understanding of the CSR term; the impact of ‘binge drinking’ on their frontline role; how they perceived their role within a CSR framework; their attitude towards refusing to serve ‘drunk’ customers; and their attitudes towards CSR strategies which aim to curb binge drinking problems (such as minimum pricing). All participants and premises were guaranteed anonymity within the study as it was recognized that certain issues surrounding licensing legislation and implementation may be contentious and affect employment status.

All the face to face interviews were transcribed before coding. Quotes from the structured data collection were extracted and presented alongside the interview question in table format (Alexander, Chen, Maclaren, and O’Gorman, 2010; O’Gorman and Gillespie, 2010). To ensure reliability multiple coders (Isabella, 1990; Richter, 2011) independently coded the data extracting relevant themes and categories. During the data analysis six themes relating to CSR emerged: problem recognition, blame culture, dealing with drunken customers, pretend CSR, atmosphere in the establishment and overall profitability. In the next section cognate themes are grouped together to form three categories: Responsibility, Practically and Value Proposition.

**Frontline hospitality staff and Corporate Social Responsibility**
Responsibility

Problem Recognition

Research participants in both phases were familiar with proposed legislation and its antecedents and aims. Phase 1 participants conveyed a sense of victimisation in their attitudes towards the social problem and proposed solutions. Participants seemed to suggest that issues concerning alcohol in society are cultivated in contexts far removed from pubs and bars yet it is the licensed trade that must pay the price. The use of terminology such as “brought up”, “city street”, and “the home” indicate a need to locate the social problem specifically beyond their own context. In interpreting further, the licensees see the drinking problem to be instilled in individuals during their upbringing, perhaps in adolescence when they experiment with alcohol. Following that, issues concern people that either drink in their own home or outdoors, thus the interviewees indirectly attribute the issues to the sale of alcohol at off-licenses or supermarkets. Bar managers and supervisors were also happy to question government proposals such as those affecting minimum pricing and happy hours.

The majority of participants recognised the social problems relating to alcohol with a general attitude that social problems concerning alcohol and its negative effects were formed privately and were manifested outside licensed businesses. Responses from customer facing staff in phase 2 indicate broad agreement with those of phase 1 with the majority responding negatively to questions relating to proposed solutions to binge drinking. Respondents highlighted alcohol problems being “more of a social problem in Scotland” and despite some respondents recognising the potential for some positive outcomes, the imposition of a minimum unit price, for example, was described as “idealistic” by one respondent and would simply shift drinking habits elsewhere. The responses from both phases indicate a high level of understanding of the policies as proposed solutions but there was scepticism over the licensed trade’s role as both a cause and control mechanism. The need to locate the problem elsewhere also manifests itself within a specific and targeted blame culture approach aimed at other stakeholders within the drink industry.

Blame Culture

Several stakeholders associated with, or operating in, the alcohol industry were cited by licensees in phases 1 as being particularly guilty of perpetuating the negative effects of drinking. Interviewees listed: the government, police, supermarkets, manufacturers, and other owners/licensees. The attitude of ‘why us’ emerges once more, showing a sense of perceived victimisation illustrated by the blame attached to government who Manager P accused of “putting all the pressure on bar operators and bar managers”. The focus on business and profit dominates with licensees blaming supermarkets and the police. The issue with supermarkets was based on price and the realisation that bars compete with supermarkets as much as they do with other licensed businesses. There is reluctant compliance with the police enforcement of responsible drinking; this is particularly illuminating when it is considered that the police are obliged to shut down uncooperative licensed businesses. However, the issues are not ostensibly linked with CSR; rather the respondents posit the impact of the pressure felt from the government, police and supermarkets as being in profit rather
than responsibility. The repetition of “[financial] pressure” and mention of “give us a [financial] hand” underlined a feeling of victimisation amongst licensees.

Manufacturers of alcoholic beverages were also identified as perpetuating problems, Manager C suggests that with regard to certain gimmick and hyper cheap products, “I don’t think they should be on the market at all”. The sale of these products, according to Manager D demonstrated, “an absence of professional ethics”. The licensees shared a considerable knowledge of the ethical concerns relating to the production and sale of alcohol yet were rather more inclined to apportion blame on stakeholders other than themselves. Manager C was strong in their opinion that sanctions should be placed on alcohol manufacturers with regard particular products without acknowledging their own contribution to the perpetuation of the problem.

The issues raised by participants specifically regarding the licensed trade related to staff turnover, the cost of running training programmes (over and above basic operational requirements), and also with a perceived lack of collective responsibility amongst license holders. Licensees firstly suggested that poor subscription to CSR legislation lay in the transient nature of employment in the licensed trade as opposed to individuals’ own propensity to engage:

“...The problem with this trade is that every month I’m having to interview new students and casual-type staff that I know will be gone by the summer, how do I keep up with the training?”

(Manager B)

The small percentage of customer facing staff in phase 2 who had received training relating to liquor licensing or legislation would appear to support this statement and might suggest therefore that front line perceptions could be influenced to a greater extent by those of their supervisors and managers.

It was also evident that interviewees considered problems relating to alcohol in a rather insular manner and a broader consideration of the role of the licensed trade in an economic and political context was largely ignored. Any recognition of collective responsibility was not apparent and licensees referred to the nature of the industry in a resigned manner inferring, ‘that’s the way things are, they aren’t going to change’. This insularity was also evident in the varied approaches and management strategies offered by interviewees. The issues highlighted in the following section suggest the licensees perpetuate a flawed operational reality.

**Practicalities**

**Dealing with Drunks**

Participants recognised that dealing with the negative effects of drinking was an inescapable part of the job, “these things just happen in bars sometimes” (Manager E). Licensees willingly discussed anecdotes regarding the behaviour of drunken customers. Manager C commented that “I’ve had a
knife pulled on me before. I’ve been threatened with violence. I’ve had people collapse from alcohol consumption”. However, with regard to the practical approaches to dealing with ‘drunk’ customers participants suggested that simple prevention may not be the most appropriate approach:

“Alcohol makes people think and behave irrationally, so the last thing you want to tell a drunk person is that they have had too much” (Manager A).

This highlights a central issue for CSR in the licensed trade; the product is a mind and behaviour altering drug, which can have serious behavioural effects on consumers and, therefore, dealing with the effects of the drug can put staff at risk. Indeed, respondents in phase 2 were underlined this risk with one respondent stating:

“Having to refuse someone can be intimidating if the person involved reacts in a negative manner”

Promoting engagement with CSR policies in marginal sectors such as this presents a paradox in that operationalizing them may put staff at risk of abuse and violence. The blind eye that was inferred by several of our managers is, perhaps, not a surprise. Instead, efforts to control overindulgence focussed on approaches that were deemed by participants to be CSR related but, in reality, are motivated by business, as opposed to social, benefits.

**CSR and day to day operations**

Several Managers suggested practical approaches to curb drunken behaviour which did not involve actually telling a customer that they should stop drinking whereas front-line bar staff displayed conflicting opinions about the implications of engaging with CSR at the operational level. One Manager, the manager of an ‘up-market’ cocktail bar proposed that:

“The prices in here are quite high which can put people off. You have to spend quite a lot to binge-drink in here, maybe £50 or £60” (Manager G).

This is a somewhat implausible statement which is more likely related to a market segmentation strategy than pricing ‘drunk’ customers out of the market, reinforced by one phase 2 participant who when commenting on alcohol pricing observed how she had:

“…drunk in establishments with both very cheap and very expensive alcohol and consumed more than my recommended daily allowance of alcohol in both”.

Other licensees suggested offering food as an alternative to binge drinking. There is no evidence that serving food in licensed premises curbs binge drinking and, once again, offering food as an adjunct to would appear to be satisfying the particular needs of a bar’s target customer than addressing CSR. The alternative to pricing customers out of binge drinking or serving food was to refuse to sell certain products or admit certain customers.

“we don’t do stag dos, we don’t do hen dos” (Manager L)

“We have doormen on every night and we’re quite selective on who we let in” (Manager Q)

Refusing to admit certain clients is not a recognised CSR practice; instead it might simply highlight the needs of a bar’s client base. If regular customers don’t like, for example, hen nights they will stop coming which is, of course, bad for business. Having effective security on the door of a bar would
certainly offer a practical solution to admitting drunken customers but a business rationale may underpin this also as doormen are also responsible for filtering potential customers so that the right client mix is admitted. For bar managers these ‘pretend CSR’ decisions appear to help them rationalise operational decisions as ‘socially responsible’.

For the staff serving the customers the situation appeared more complex. Respondents in phase 2 of the data collection offered a range of responses to the issue of operationalising CSR. Some participants were:

“...confident in doing so [refusing to serve a drunk customer] as it would prevent more problematic situations in the long run”

others identified that it was “the right thing to do”. However, around half of the front line staff appeared to suffer from conflicting emotions when faced with the decision as to whether or not to serve a customer who appeared drunk. CSR engagement at operational level is fraught with challenges for staff that fear both the reaction of the customer but also of their position if they make a poor decision. The small number of respondents who had received formal training and the lack of engagement shown by some respondents in phase 1 suggest that front line staff may be isolated when it comes to challenging decisions. Furthermore, the vagaries of the licensed trade result in managers justifying their lack of adherence to advised CSR approaches through alternative strategies that exist largely to satisfy the particular business demands than address a CSR issue. The reason for these ‘pretend’ CSR approaches and the tentativeness shown by the front line staff can, perhaps, be explained by the final theme which relates to the core value proposition of a bar and the effect that responsible drinking may have therein.

Value Proposition

Atmosphere

The first dimension of the theme related to the atmosphere within a bar. Here, participants openly observed that customers who had consumed alcohol become more uninhibited and, therefore, created a livelier atmosphere. One bartender observed that “the best nights are the ones when the customers are really up for it”. There was also a sense that ‘drunk’ customers didn’t necessarily have to be problematic, “I don’t care how much people drink in my place as long as they don’t cause any trouble” (Participant H). One licensee hypothesized that the likely effects of a zealously managed CSR policy would not, necessarily be positive:

“a bar full of responsible drinkers would have all the atmosphere of a mortuary” (participant, K)

For front line staff excessive consumption at certain times of the year was seen as a bonus despite the risks:

“You get sexually harassed and verbally abused but on the other hand it increases the amount of tips.”
Our data suggests a different kind of conflict, less moral and more based on the underlying purpose of the bar and the atmosphere required to ensure success. If this atmosphere is reliant, to a degree, on the level of intoxication of its customers then balancing social responsibility and profitability becomes problematic - this is reinforced in the following section.

Profitability
The potential financial benefits associated with binge drinking presents a paradox for staff and is a pivotal issue for CSR and the drink industry. The main aim of businesses was to make money and participants recognised that refusing sales by preventing excess consumption reduced the opportunities to sell and risked future profitability:

“What’s the point in having a business if you’re not trying to make money from the thing that you’re selling?” Manager K

“Publicans are really not remotely interested in drinking habits, public health, units consumed on premises, they are more interested in the amount of profit they can make off any given week” Manager H

The potential financial pitfalls of applying CSR approaches to licensed premises could be significant, particularly as in one case a bar manager observed that:

“in my experience, some of the worst behaving customers are those who spend the most cash on the most expensive drinks – the work hard/play hard crowd where money is of no object” (Manager N)

There was also conflict evident from front line staff between the requirements of a CSR led policy to refuse to serve drunken customers and the need for licensed premises to be profitable:

“I feel a duty to my boss who is struggling with the bottom line. What can I do [sell] for him that gives him a good [financial] outcome at the end of the night”

“I would feel guilty, under pressure to do it [serve a drunk] anyway, torn between making money for the company and keeping the customer happy versus your own moral judgement.”

Our findings reveal high awareness but low engagement with CSR policies among respondents in line with other studies within the hospitality sector (See Dodds & Kuehnel, 2010; Jones, et al., 2006). Evidence that the organisations were actively embracing socially responsible policies was either superficial or appeared more financially related.

Engagement with CSR
A veneer of subscription to CSR practices was evident within phase 1 veiling what was, essentially, minimal engagement or ‘lip service’ paid to CSR policies supported the development of avenues of revenue generation or product management. For example, the serving of food was discussed in the context of socially responsibility to allow food to inhibit the negative effects of consuming alcohol. However, this practice also generates revenues from food sales later into the evening and ultimately could simply facilitate more prolonged drinking among customers. Actions like these give the impression of acting responsibly but operationally, indicate that establishments have control measures to ensure the right clientele are welcomed in order to foster an atmosphere that is
conducive to a profitable evening. The highlighted reinforce Holcomb et al.’s (2007) assertion that with regard to CS the reality has not yet hit.

Respondents considered customers to show symptoms of a social alcohol problem that was cultivated out with licensed establishments. Weaver, et al. (1999) and Jones, et al. (2006) discuss societal acceptance of CSR policies and its importance in the engagement of firms. In our study there was a disconnect between how licensees perceived a binge drinking society and the CSR policies designed to combat them, thus enforcement remained limited. The notion of the licensed trade being a victim of a problem created, in the respondents’ opinions, elsewhere was tangible as well as a reluctance to engage with an issue that neither they were responsible for nor their customers were interested in addressing. The clear difficulty here was that the consequences of not engaging with CSR policies did not appear to pose a direct threat to the success of the business.

Bonday (2008) suggests that the implementation of CSR can be a source of conflict between the objectives of the CSR policy and the personal power of an individual. In our study, this conflict had dual outcomes both of which resulted in inactivity by the employee towards CSR. Firstly, employees highlighting a sense of divided loyalty between the requirements of the CSR policy and their commitment towards what they perceived as their primary role in the business, to sell drinks. Secondly, anxiety was evident in front line employee concern over the potential abusive or violent implications that might result from refusing to serve a customer. Showing loyalty to the organisation by spurning CSR or being concerned over personal safety is further indication of the tension between engagement with CSR and operational realities (Collier and Esteban 2007; Tsai and Huang 2008).

Vuontisjärvi (2006) questions employees’ potential commitment and motivation toward CSR. In our study employees seemed to support nascent legislation but lacked support in carrying it out, others seemed disinterested. The notion of CSR as a complex and vague philosophical construct without clear boundaries (Lantos, 2005; Valor, 2005) further inhibits employee engagement in the licensed trade due to the majority of employees not being suitably invested in the industry to care about their conduct. High staff turnover amongst front line staff further hinders the ability to stimulate and monitor engagement with CSR as the perpetual need to source new staff and train them acted as an obstacle to investing in further educating them on CSR policy. Bolton, et al.’s (2011) discussion on CSR becoming embedded in an organisation through a process of initiation → implementation → maturation reveals the difficulty faced by the licensed trade as organisations could perpetually flounder around fundamental problems with initiation. As high rates of staff turnover preclude cohesive implementation of CSR policies, the hope of successful implementation or eventual maturation becomes distant.

**CSR Implementation Matrix**

Research participants were aware of the issues surrounding alcohol problems but were quick to lay the blame at the door of other institutions and adopted a ‘victim’ stance with regard to the social
problems. However, the recognition of a social problem concerning alcohol by the government and the potential for the licensed trade to be a vehicle for encouraging responsible drinking still arguably exists. Uncertain or weak employee engagement is central to the difficulties identified and the industry is essentially floundering in a liminal position of veneered engagement which lies between low engagement and true potential for socially responsible achievement.

In comparison, the tobacco industry is different to the drinks industry in that, by the nature of the product, employee engagement with CSR could be well integrated into the corporate culture yet legitimacy would never be achieved beyond transactional integrity. Thus as an industry tobacco is ‘stuck’, achievement of socially responsible business practices and values are negated outright by the consequences of consuming its products. If the fundamental concept of *primum non nocere* is accepted the drinks industry is in a stronger position, as it is possible to drink responsibly. As such the tobacco and drinks industry do not necessarily occupy the same CSR/ethical territory. Enforcing CSR at an operational level is problematic within the licensed trade where managers may adopt strategies in the spirit of CSR but in the main satisfy the business needs of a bar and avoid the destruction of its principle value proposition.

For employees, the paradox of having to sell intoxicating beverages means that a fine line is constantly walked between running a lively, atmospheric and profitable business and an edgy, violent and unethical one. The drinks industry could promote responsible drinking if employee engagement was to be progressed beyond successful initiation to implementation and maturation. We offer a CSR engagement matrix (Figure 1) which illustrates these considerations.

Due to the high turnover of staff in the hospitality industry it is possible for businesses who are keen to develop CSR to become ‘trapped’ no matter how much is invested at the management. Where
employee engagement is low (or misguided) certain businesses will remain ‘flounders’ but the potential alluded to earlier indicates that with increased employee and management engagement, corporate legitimacy would increase and lift the drinks industry to be more of a CSR ‘achiever’. Finally, the data points to the bottom right quadrant being ‘isolated’ relating to circumstances where staff want to adhere to CSR policies but are hamstrung by reluctant or unsupportive employers.

Our theoretical observations focus on the relationship between liability and engagement. CSR policy takes an industry perspective, which is natural and understandable. However, from a cynical perspective it is easy to project from our findings that many licensees are not interested in enforcing CSR policies in the interest of sustaining profit levels. Conversely, socially responsible licensed establishment owners may still suffer from the high turnover of frontline staff who are characterised by lower commitment and engagement with any seemingly ‘peripheral’ policy or interests. Thus it emerges that CSR in the licensed trade is marred by a dissonance between the engagement of the actual alcohol vendors and the liability associated with the owners. The endemic issue is that the frontline vendors neither have incentive to engage nor liability for failure to engage. CSR within the licensed trade therefore has to be exercised at the coal face, where vending and consumption are occurring.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Industry

The first step in the implementation of CSR is to understand the views of all employees responsible for implementation. One of the issues we have identified is that owners/managers are not necessarily confronted directly with the issues related to irresponsible drinking and those frontline staff that are confronted with them are not empowered to care. This study is concerned with nascent legislation. The full impact and success of these policies will not have emerged as yet and thus judging current levels of engagement is only indicative.

Our recommendations for implementation of CSR policies in the drinks industry are threefold: appreciate the structure of the industry in terms of management and frontline vendors; incentivise training; and incentivise enforcement. This research suggests dissonance between the legislation that is passed to owners and the extent to which that information is honoured and disseminated. The nature of the industry involves fast turnover of often casual staff thus legislation has to be perpetually disseminated by management to new staff that fundamentally who have greater allegiance to those whom are paying them. Legislation must focus on those who dispense the alcohol on the front line and it must be presented in a way that makes them care. Our recommendation is that front line staff must be targeted directly and incentivised to engage proactively. Paying individuals to attend training courses and thereafter incentivising the enforcement of legislation will encourage the engagement of potentially transient and disinterested frontline staff. The practicalities of this will involve further deep consideration beyond this study but
material benefits for enforcement through commercial sponsorship of the process could offer benefits for staff and encourage engagement.

Attempts to implement CSR in the licensed trade in only one country limits the scope of this study. Scotland is renowned for social issues relating to health and lifestyle thus the extremes of the problem that legislation is attempting to counter in Scotland may not be as pertinent to issues in other countries although anecdotal evidence suggests problems of binge drinking in many global contexts. The employment environment alluded to in this study may be peculiar to Scotland and the UK more generally. Lower rates of pay and varying organisational structures mean that the hospitality and tourism industry tends to encourage a more transient frontline workforce. In other countries levels of perceived professional integrity and employment structures make working in the hospitality and tourism industry a more credible and career-orientated endeavour and thus engagement with CSR may vary.

Reviewing this study in five years would add to the strength of the results. This would develop further insight into the impact of the legislation and the way in which engagement has evolved over time. Given the nature of employment discussed, research involving leaders in the drinks industry could help to further our understanding of the status quo of the licensed trade in Scotland. Perhaps developing recommendations for improving the status quo could stimulate a more supportive and positive employment environment for industry workers. Further, this study focuses on licensees and front line employees in the drinks industry and using a student sample for the front line employees meant that only younger front line staff were included. Other stakeholders and a broader sample of employees will have valuable perspectives that could be explored to add depth and texture to the results presented here. The relationship between the personal drinking habits of managers and employees may also have some bearing on attitudes and this would be a fascinating area for future research. The projected potential for the drinks industry to become an ‘achiever’ remains untested as does the application of the matrix to other industries.

Ultimately, engagement with CSR in the drinks industry is bad for business. The nature of alcohol means that stamping down on its consumption in pubs will only cause the problem to resurface elsewhere. In the tobacco industry, smoking can be controlled through sales since the actual consumption of cigarettes is relatively innocuous, whereas it is the consumption of alcohol that is the problem. Fundamentally the challenge is to navigate the ethics of the relationship between the vending of alcohol and the subsequent consequences of its consumption whilst simultaneously addressing long standing issues of transient employment in the hospitality industry and that will be no easy task.
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