

1

The Development of Bars

Aims and learning outcomes

This chapter aims to provide the knowledge necessary to understand the origin and development of the bar and its alcoholic beverages, from the ancient times up to the 21st Century. It also explores the various types of ownership, designs, traditions and innovative practices which modern pubs and bars have adapted to sustain their business. On completion of this chapter the learner should be able to:

- Explain the origin of the pub/bar and its alcoholic beverages, from the ancient times to the 21st century
- Explain the development and identify the types, functions and traditions of modern bars
- Describe the modern innovative practices which bar owners are adopting to encourage business.

1.1 Introduction

Country bars, town bars, city bars and the 'local' pub are all social gathering places. They act as the primary focal points of most towns and cities, and they come in every size, shape and description. Although their opening times vary in different countries and cities, these establishments have existed for centuries, offering customers, travellers and tourists access to the food, drinks, music and the company of the local people. The sheer number of bars and public houses around the world and the fact that you can find one just about anywhere in some countries, may lead you to believe that certain nations are very fond of alcohol, but this is simply not true. You will find that these nations are usually very social people, and the pub is more often than not a gathering place. You will feel the pub's own particular atmosphere and personality as soon as you step through the door; some are quiet and reserved, some a little livelier, a lot like someone's home really. Most everyone's welcome, and the company constantly changes. The 'local' is the term used to indicate a customer's favourite bar – a home from home.

1.2 A brief history of bars and alcoholic drinks

Throughout history, there have been many names for establishments where people gather to drink alcoholic beverages. Bars or pubs, bierkellers, brewpubs, which were formally known as public houses or alehouses, are drinking establishments all of which have always been central to the national culture of a great number of countries around the world (Brandwood, Davison & Slaughter, 2004). In many areas globally and particularly in rural locations, the bar has always been the focal point and communications hub of the community (Cronin & O'Connor, 2003). The evolution of the bar is closely linked with the evolution of alcoholic drinks and the introduction of hospitality.

The consumption of alcohol lowers inhibitions, can facilitate relaxation and increase the enjoyment of dining, and has contributed towards a more sociable and convivial atmosphere between locals, invited guests and travellers for many centuries around the world (Babor, 1986). Bars have also helped change the political landscape in most countries; many individuals compare them to the coffee-houses of Asia and Eastern Europe or the restaurants of France (Austin, 1985). The uniquely different allure of bars has been that people of all classes could mix together. Early laws fixed the price that tavern-keepers could charge for drinks, so they couldn't cater just to wealthy patrons (Braudel, 1974). Bars have always been where people communicate, share their news and discuss the issues of the day. The only requirement was that you leave your rank or qualifications at the door because everyone has an equal say in the bar (Patrick, 1952).

Alcohol in the ancient times

Neolithic period

One of the earliest drinks known to have been produced is beer and dates back to the late Stone Age. The discovery of beer jugs has established the fact that intentionally fermented beverages existed at least as early as the Neolithic period around 10,000 BC (Patrick, 1952). Molloy (2002) supports this contention and adds that during this period wild barley was first domesticated and systematically harvested in the Fertile Crescent region of modern day Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

'Code of Hammurabi' – the oldest recorded hospitality laws

Hammurabi was one of the first dynasty kings of the city of Babylon (1810 – 1750 BC). The Louvre Museum in Paris contains a large diorite stela with the inscriptions commonly known as the Code of Hammurabi. O'Gorman (2010) contends that within the ancient inscriptions, there are laws governing commercial hospitality from at least 1800 BC. He adds that hostels and inns in Mesopotamia were in the business of supplying drinks, women and accommodation for strangers. Drinks included date palm wine and barley beer, and there were strict regulations against diluting them (p. 5). Driver and Miles (1952) in a further translation of the same stela show that the punishment for watering beer was death by drowning.

The Egyptians

Wine clearly appeared as a finished product in Egyptian pictographs around 4000 BC (Lucia, 1963a) and one of the oldest beer recipes can be directly dated to 1800 BC. Brewing dates from the beginning of civilization in ancient Egypt. Osiris, the god of wine, was worshiped throughout the entire country and the Egyptians believed that this important god also invented beer (Allen, 1936). Both beer and wine were offered to gods. Cellars and wine presses even had a god whose hieroglyph was a winepress (Wissler cited by Mok, 1932).

The ancient Egyptians made at least 17 varieties of beer and at least 24 varieties of wine which were used for pleasure, nutrition, medicine, ritual, remuneration and funerary purposes for use in the after-life.

Chinese drinking traditions in ancient times

A variety of alcoholic beverages have been used in China since prehistoric times (Granet, 1957). In ancient times people drank when holding a memorial ceremony, offering sacrifices to gods or their ancestors, pledging resolution before going into battle, celebrating victory, before feuding and official executions, for taking an oath of allegiance, while attending the ceremonies of birth, marriage, reunions, departures, death, and festival banquets in China. Around 1116 BC, alcohol was one of China's treasuries largest sources of income and was widely used in all segments of Chinese society as a source of inspiration, and hospitality and for combating fatigue.

Greece – from mead to wine

The first alcoholic beverage to obtain widespread popularity in what is now Greece was mead, a fermented beverage made from honey and water. However, by 1700 BC, wine making was commonplace, and during the next thousand years, wine drinking assumed the functions so commonly found around the world: it was incorporated into religious rituals, it became important in hospitality, it was used for medicinal purposes and it became an integral part of daily meals (Babor, 1986). As a beverage, it was drunk in many ways: warm and chilled, pure and mixed with water, plain and spiced (Raymond, 1927).

The Romans

A consequence of the massive expansion of the Roman Empire, following the fall of Greece, was the substantial and widespread development of viticulture and brewing throughout Europe. Beers were produced by the fermentation of different grains and the development of brewing was most rapid in countries where the soil and climate were not suited to viticulture. There were also beer-like drinks such as mead, made from honey and grain. The Romans also further developed the concept of the *taberna* (taverns).