PROGRAM EVALUATION OF MEMBERSHIP
DECLINE AND RETENTION
AT THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This research examined membership satisfaction, engagement, and volunteerism at the Commonwealth Club. Specifically, the study was designed to answer the primary question: “What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain the current membership numbers?” To support an answer to the primary question, a series of sub questions were developed to identify reasons for potential membership losses in the future: “Are members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club?” “Does membership feel the Club is properly managed?” “How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?” and “What may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?”

Starting with a literature review, this researcher collected information relative to internal and external factors that can be linked with membership decline in private and social organizations. Additionally, data related to volunteerism, the types of people who volunteer and their motivation were examined.

A program evaluation was selected as the research type. Survey question were created to receive member feedback on membership satisfaction, demographics, volunteerism and solicit ideas for membership growth. Membership opinion data was collected directly via SurveyMonkey.com or by hardcopy survey, then manually input into a data collector on the SurveyMonkey site.
The collected data was analyzed, compared to, and confirmed by the information gathered from the literature review, which offered insights to improvements in volunteering and membership engagement. The primary research question was supported by the data collected: Members overwhelmingly agree they are going to renew their memberships. The literature reviewed confirmed data regarding membership age and membership declines, as well as the generation preferences being key components to future growth. Data received as a result of the sub questions, clearly show membership satisfaction with events, food, pricing and management, and identified a high number of members who no longer wish to volunteer. The Commonwealth Club will benefit from both the literature and data in this research in regards to future volunteerism.

To better engage and retain members and volunteers, the following recommendations are offered to the Board and membership of the Commonwealth Club: Identify the members who have never volunteered, yet wish to, as indicated by survey responses. Create autonomous teams by using sub-committees, preferably cross-generational. They should be encouraged and used to plan and stage events that support multi-generational preferences. Maintain and promote the traditional events that are associated with a British club, as these are key reasons new members join such clubs. When soliciting volunteers, understand what motivates, or may demotivate them. To engage volunteers, task descriptions and training should be provided, and an emphasis of the importance of volunteers should be relayed to the membership as often as possible. This researcher suggests using the newsletter or social media to acknowledge who volunteered and what they did. In addition, create a volunteer of the month award. Finally, continually collect and evaluate data to identify problematic trends before they hit critical levels.
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Chapter 1: Problem Definition

Background

Currently in its 54th year of existence, the Commonwealth Club is one of the oldest British social clubs in the United States. Available records illustrate a steady decrease in club membership from 2001, when club membership was 654 members. It is estimated from previous membership secretaries, but not confirmed with data, membership was once at an all-time high of 790 members. Today, there are 336 members, some 50% lower than in 2001. Retention of current membership and future growth is critical to its survival.

Beginning as a predominately British club, the founding members were skilled trade’s workers from England and Scotland looking for comradery and a venue to celebrate and remember the British traditions of their homeland. Today, the Commonwealth Club is a vastly more complex organization than it was during the humble beginnings, where it evolved from the basements of the founding members to the Club it is today. Now, in a building that can support up to 220 guests, with full kitchen and bar facilities, 14 professional quality dart boards, and a large dance floor, the Club can fully support a wide range of social events.

From the onset, the purpose of the Club was: “To unite people of British and British Commonwealth origin, their families, friends and those interested in British culture for social enjoyment, fellowship and mutual help. To promote British traditions and culture. To promote and foster good-will and understanding among all people of all nationalities, and that no person shall be excluded on grounds of color, race, or creed” (Commonwealth Club, 2016). The membership ethnicity demographic has changed over the years, expanding to a more diverse audience. However, the core value; the preservation and demonstration of British traditions, is
still a very important aspect for those considered the more “traditional “membership. This brings
to the forefront an interesting problem for devising a plan to increase membership, while
maintaining the core values that many current members wish to retain.

Despite the years of membership declines and falling attendance at events, the Club is
operating at reduced levels. Revenue declines have necessitated the need for some tough
decisions to be made; there are no paid staff, all work is done by volunteers, comprised mostly of
Board Members, less attended functions were dropped, menus were reduced or eliminated on
some events. From a traditional perspective, the Club maintains close relations with other local
ethnic and social groups such as, the Saint Andrews Society of Detroit, the Detroit Open Dart
League (the oldest Dart League in the United States), as well as many other cultural and civic
groups. The Commonwealth Club is a 501 (c) (7) not for profit, member owned and operated
entity.

The Club is managed by the Executive Board, comprised of 11 members holding the
following positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Public Relation Chairperson, Hall
Manager, Entertainment Chairperson, Ticket Chairperson, Building Chairperson, Membership
Secretary, Newsletter Editor, and the Recording Secretary. All positions are volunteer and
require no previous experience, except for the position of President. To be eligible to run for
President, a person must complete a full two-year term in any other Board position. All positions
are two-year terms except for President which is a one-year term. Twice yearly, the Board is
required to hold a general meeting to report to the membership the financial status of the Club,
upcoming events, membership counts and any other club related information. The first meeting
occurs in the March/April timeframe to report on business and open the floor to the membership
for discussion. Additionally, any proposed changes to By-laws must be presented at this meeting
in order for the membership secretary have time to prepare the proposal for the Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting occurs in September. As with the Bi-Annual, business and reports are presented to the membership. However, in addition, the election of Board Members takes place at the AGM. As a precaution, the election cycles are staggered to prevent all positions coming up for election in one year. Recent history has shown that many positions go unfilled due to a lack of volunteers; for example, there are currently open positions, and as a result, those tasks must be incorporated into the workload of the remaining board members.

Oversight of the Executive Board is conducted by the Executive Trustee Board, made up of former Presidents. Their role is to provide a check and balance over active boards and ensure the best interest of the Club and the membership are considered. The Executive Trustee Board does not meet, but rather, is called into service when situations dictate so.

Research Problem

In 2001 there were 654 members, today, at the time of this research, that number was 336. Lower membership adversely affects the organization on several fronts: Declining revenues from membership dues, reduced liquor income and catered events, lowered morale, fewer volunteers, deferred building maintenance, lower quality and loss of further members (Ferreira, 2007). Recent attempts to survey members who failed to renew the memberships, were unsuccessful due to an extremely poor response rate. While the surveying of former members is an excellent approach to understanding the reasons for non-renewals, it is important to stem the current reduction on membership by identifying the satisfaction of current membership, and for future planning, to include a survey for members who do not renew. Therefore, this study focused on the primary question: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain the current membership numbers? Simply put; if membership continues to drop, the future of the Club may
be in jeopardy. However, to address the primary question, this research also focused on the following set of sub-questions:

1. Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club?
2. Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed?
3. How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?
4. What may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?

For this study, this researcher created a 24-question survey to question only the current members living in Michigan, in order to identify any membership dissatisfaction in several key areas, such as: dues, entertainment, catering, food and drink quality and pricing. Additional areas such as management and volunteerism were also addressed.

**Research Audience and Rationale**

Information and data derived from this study will be presented to the Executive Board and to the General Membership at the first available general meeting. This will most likely occur in March or April 2017. Data was used to identify the means in which the Club can retain and grow membership, as well as increase membership participation, attendance at events and increase volunteerism.

Gaining further insight into membership losses and stemming future membership loss is imperative to the short-term survival of the Club, however the work does not end with simply retaining members. Engaging members to attend more events will also create an additional revenue stream beyond membership dues. Thus, the data collected in this research, as well as recommendations provided by this researcher, provides management the tools to make informed decisions regarding future membership growth and define long term survival requirements.
Scope/Delimitations

Research for this study focused on membership retention and included a survey of current members. Former members, or those who have not renewed their membership were not surveyed. Archived data from many different Executive Boards was used in this paper, however, due to the nature of volunteerism and the different skillsets and abilities of those taking board positions, the quality of record keeping has been inconsistent over the years, as well as the location of such data, as past records were not turned over to the succeeding Board members. Data used in this research paper included; annual membership renewals and rosters, Annual General Meetings (AGM) and Bi-Annual meeting minutes, as well as attendance numbers for ticketed event sales.
Chapter 2: Review of the Related Literature

Introduction to the Literature

The literature available regarding membership clubs relates to two distinct types: County Club, e.g., Tennis, Golf Clubs and Health Club markets, and Fraternal, Benevolent organizations such as the Rotary or Elks. Little information was available on social or expatriate organizations such as the Commonwealth Club. However, the literature identified key elements affecting membership clubs in general. The literature has been organized, in this chapter, into sub-topics that best illuminate the research topic of identifying causes membership decline, how to retain members and volunteerism within the organization.

Presentation of the Literature

Factors Affecting Membership Decline. Historically, people have joined social clubs to meet, socialize, and develop friendships and associations with those of similar backgrounds (Ferreira, 2006). Some join strictly from a business networking standpoint while others look for commonality, or to pursue a new interest. Regardless of the association type, similar external factors have effects on the membership numbers. In “Contemporary Club Management”, Ferreira identifies several external factors that directly impact membership clubs: economic downturns, overbuilding, competition, an aging membership, and generational preferences.

Economic downturns dramatically affect social clubs through a reduction in cash moving through the system, as this spending is regarded as discretionary spending, or disposable income, rather than spending on essential needs. As cash flows decrease, so does discretionary spending. Business may reduce client entertainment budgets, members may earn less or even lose their job, thus making membership unaffordable. Members who are retired may visit less often, or spend
less on the occasions they visit (Ferreira, Maier, and Johanson, 2012). Additionally, during the period of 2008 through 2010, not only did membership levels decrease in clubs, but also the consumption behaviors of customers. Customers switched to cheaper alternatives and wanted a better value for their money. The balance of cost reduction versus maintaining high quality standards became a greater challenge for social organizations (Ferreira, et.al., 2012).

Overbuilding and competition from other similar clubs, all of whom are vying for the same shrinking dollar pool creates an environment in which an organization must remain competitive and may require an upgrade its facilities, menus or pricing structure, while still controlling cost. Some clubs have relaxed strict membership rules, and or created niche membership levels to attract customers to the facility. Duke (2009), advocates the implementation of “get acquainted” type memberships, in which one can purchase a daily or monthly membership to introduce the potential new member to the facility and the offerings of such.

One of the most prevalent issues facing membership clubs is the aging of its membership. Clubs have older members who pass away, or leave due to health or financial reasons. Those in colder climates may lose older members who relocate to warmer places. More established, traditional clubs still require new members to be sponsored by a current member. The use of an internal means of marketing may have been successful in the past, it is proven to be an outdated methodology as memberships continue to decline, and clubs continue to market to the same demographic (Duke, 2009).

A topic which is detailed later, is the lack of younger members. Recruitment of younger members can be difficult if the organization perceived as an older person’s club and even if
successful in recruiting younger members, management must understand the needs of younger generations differ from those of the more established membership.

Generational preferences weigh heavily on the ability to recruit younger members. In “Farewell to the Lodge”, Fost (1996) identified the reason why many Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, never joined the same social clubs their fathers did. At a time when “Men Only” clubs were the norm, many of the younger generation were turned off by male only clubs, and subsequently, membership levels dropped. To help reverse this trend, many clubs began admitting women as members. The aspect of reinventing to adapt to an ever-changing demographic is now the norm. Preference gaps seen between Baby Boomers and their Traditionalist parents continue to be seen between Baby Boomers and those in Gen X, and Y. Tompson, Koutroumanis, Brownlee & Hoke (2014), identify the differences between the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y groups, and the impact of the demographics and needs of each group in regards to a social environment.

Baby Boomers were the most active group in the private club sector and with a median age of 53 years old (Data referenced by Tompson, et.al, from a 2009 study), this generation accounted for 40% of all spending in the United states in 2015. Most Baby Boomers are married and well educated, with 68% having attained a college degree. The Baby Boomer has a high level of discretionary income and the average household income is over $100,000.00 USD, with total assets over $1,000,000.00 USD. Baby Boomers prefer a formal dining experience which include pre-and post-meal drinks.

Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1977, comprise 50 million people. This is a highly educated, technical generation with over 60% earning a college degree. Most of those in Generation X have children under 18 years of age and the family time and work balance is a high
priority for them. The key social experience needs for this generation are casual dress, kid
friendly, value for the money and friendly service. Most members of this generation are
becoming established in their careers, with women becoming a larger part of the workforce and
attaining higher levels of power in the business world.

Generation Y, those born between 1978 and 1994 are establishing themselves in their
careers and are expected to change careers more often to seek responsibility and creative
challenges. This is the first digitally native generation. They use social media for both
communication and decision making in regards to leisure and spending. Impromptu dining,
varied ethnic meals and socializing with friends are key attributes. Generation Y, with the
smallest amount of disposable income of the three generations, prefers a casual, laid back
atmosphere in their social environment and liken it to an extension of their living room.
(Tompson, et.al, 2014)

**Member Satisfaction, Identity and Loyalty.** When examining the identification levels
of members within an organization, Ferreira (1996), used three factors as a basis for research:
Product factors, which include the perception of the Club and what the offerings to the
membership. Affiliation factors, which include length of membership and reputation within the
organization, Participation factors, the amount of individual membership usage of the facilities.
Each factor identified components of the needs and feelings members have when belonging to
club. Belonging to a group or organization provides a sense of positive self-identification
through affiliation, when the members are satisfied with the membership benefits of the
organization, and members who identify with an organization, usually remain loyal to the
organization. Additionally, people who are more engaged in the organization through event
participation, volunteerism, or donations think of their membership more often.
Methods to Improve Membership Retention. Much of the literature reviewed identifies ways to attract new members to organizations. However, Rotary International (2016) identifies: “Keeping current members is a sign of a clubs’ stability and overall well-being”. With that in mind, the Rotary offers their various clubs a retention and assessment package to identify reasons for membership termination. The identification process begins with the identification of historical and current attrition rates; this is made easier for members using the Rotary International central data repository. The next steps are rather straightforward; identify when and why members left, develop strategies for keeping members and create an action plan.

Of specific importance is the understanding of the length of time a person was a member before leaving the organization, due to the key characteristics involved. Rotary identifies several reasons for membership loss: Those who leave after short tenures, less than two years, were unclear on club functionality, were not engaged within the organization or had other commitments. Those who remained longer before leaving, were dissatisfied or frustrated with club leadership, or felt their expectations were not being met. Finally, the longest-term members usually leave because of retirement, health or financial issues. As a proactive approach, Rotary suggests reviewing with members, the potential reason why they may leave the Club, and gain an insight on the memberships overall satisfaction through surveys or one to one discussions.

Retention and growth of volunteerism within the Commonwealth Club. Based on results from the membership survey, most the members are over 60 years old and are either uninterested or unable to volunteer. While the survey results are discussed later in this paper, this researcher felt it is important to note the benefits provided to an organization through volunteerism, which include increased profitability through the reduction of payroll, increased employee or membership moral and increased engagement (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Without a
solid volunteer base, it is quite likely the organization will eventually cease to exist. Thus, volunteer growth and retention should be addressed in the same context and urgency as membership retention.

The literature reviewed regarding volunteerism contained several areas relatable to the Commonwealth Club in respect to aging volunteers and the motivation for aging volunteers. An understanding of the reason why people volunteer in the first place is addressed at the beginning of this section.

What motivates volunteers? To successfully recruit and retain volunteers, one must understand the motives of the volunteers. The reasons for volunteering vary from person to person, however, per Okun (1994), these reasons can be broken in six classifications: Values, social, protective, esteem, understanding, and career. Values based volunteering is a strong belief in the importance of helping others. Social volunteerism relates to fitting volunteering into ones’ social network. Protective motivation is the need to relieve negative feelings through volunteering, while esteem is the need to feel needed and important. Understanding, is to gain a greater knowledge of the world, through immersion into a different culture or environment, and lastly, the career related gains that come from volunteering are career motivators (Okun, 1994). Further identification of volunteer motives begins by defining them as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, is engaging in volunteerism for its own sake, because of the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from doing so. Extrinsic motivation, is engaging in volunteerism for a reward, or acknowledgement (Millette & Gagne, 2008). Of the previously mentioned motivations, only values are intrinsic motivators. The reminder fall under the extrinsic category as the motivation is related to a self-gain. Okun and Millet and Gagne provide research into motivation and reasoning for volunteering, however, Okun’s research related directly to
older volunteers and the results of his studies have been interrelated into this literature review. Okun found the major reasons for elder volunteerism are: to help others, to feel useful or productive and to fulfill a moral obligation. Additionally, the research identified, the following were not main motivators for volunteering among elders: to have a companion, use up spare time, alleviate feelings of loneliness, to learn new skills, alleviate boredom or feelings of guilt (Okun, 1994). Thus, per Okun’s findings, the motivators for older volunteers are intrinsic in nature.

The sense of community (SOC), is the feeling of belonging by members of community or organization and identifies that the members matter to each other as well as to the community. SOC was used as a predictor by Okun & Michel in a 2006 study, to identify who does and does not volunteer among the “young-old”, those between the ages of 60 to 74 years of age. The study found as SOC increased, so did the motivation to volunteer. However, the likelihood of divorced, separated or widowed members volunteering is less than that of married members. Most older volunteers did so with their spouse. If the spouse was no longer present, they may lose motivation to volunteer. Those working more than 40 hours per week were less likely to volunteer than those not working (Okun & Michel, 2006). Additionally, in non-elderly volunteers (Bussell & Forbes, 2002) identified the levels of commitment may be low purposely, thus preventing disruption in the lives of the volunteers. This information is important to the association, as plans are put in place to identify means to increase the volunteerism within the Club. It is extremely important for members feel a sense of community to help increase the motivation to volunteer, as well as understanding the outside commitments of younger volunteers.
Family background is a factor in the motivation for volunteering. Per Bussell and Forbes (2002), if the parents volunteered in an organization, the children were likely to also volunteer. In the case of the Commonwealth Club, formed in the early 1960’s, this partially holds true as many original members who emigrated from the United Kingdom (U.K.), are still actively involved, and those with U.K ancestry remain involved. To a lesser degree, though, very few children of the original members remain active in the Club. The was topic was identified earlier within the literature review when reviewing the Baby Boomers reluctance to join their “Fathers” club.

**How to maximize motivation.** Having a better understanding of the who’s and why’s of those that volunteers, provided a solid foundation for developing a plan to recruit more volunteers. The final area of this literature review is to identify what can be done to maximize the motivation for those who do volunteer. There are many aspects previously mentioned as reasons for volunteering. However, once involved, the task then remains to keep these individuals engaged in the work they do.

The job characteristics model, developed by Hackman and Oldham, is based on the idea that the task itself is key to employee motivation, and is be broken into five core dimensions: Skill variety, which uses the different skills or talents of the worker. Task identity, the completion of an entire piece of work, and the worker seeing the outcome of such work. Task significance, or how the task impacts others’ lives. Autonomy, the freedom of the worker to make decisions and determinations on how the task will be completed. Feedback, direct and clear information on the effectiveness of the worker’s efforts. Within these five dimensions are the characteristics that contribute to job meaningfulness, personal responsibility, and the effectiveness of one’s efforts (Daniel, 1998).
Per (Millette & Gagne, 2008), testing of the job characteristics model has been limited to traditional working environs, however testing in the volunteer sector is new. Millette and Gagne surveyed 124 volunteers to measure their autonomous motivation, work satisfaction and the intent to quit based on task dissatisfaction. Results of the survey indicated job characteristics had a small effect to autonomous motivation; this may be due to the intrinsic nature of volunteering. It is interesting to note; autonomous motivation was higher in women than men in the Millette study. When measuring different types of motivation, intrinsic motivation related to most job characteristics. Thus, when a person is intrinsically motivated, the job characteristics noted in the Hackman model, have a greater effect on volunteer attitudes. Additionally, satisfaction was found to be higher when a volunteer enjoyed their work, as opposed to other external pressures to volunteer or receiving a reward. Volunteers felt they should be having fun in what they are doing. Finally, the survey indicated most volunteers left their volunteer job for health or illness reasons more so than because of dissatisfaction with the work they performed (Millette & Gagne, 2008). Finally, acknowledgement of volunteers should be made to both the volunteers themselves and to members of the organization. This may seem counter intuitive to those who volunteer strictly for intrinsic reason, but it identifies the value of the work done, and can be a tool to help motivate and engage more volunteerism within the organization. Wired impact, an online organization specializing in nonprofits marketing, suggests using the organizations Facebook or social media page, newsletters, or any club literature to thanks volunteers, identify who they are and the work perform. New members to organizations, perhaps unfamiliar with the internal processes of an organization, can use this media means as a conduit to learn more about volunteering and who to speak to about doing so.
**Summary of the Literature**

In London during World War 1, Canadian philanthropists created the King George and Queen Mary Maple Leaf Club a place for “Canadians only”, to “…keep their soldiers off British streets and out of trouble” (Cozzi, 2011). The goal also, was to keep the memories of home fresh in their minds and bring the soldiers a “little bit” of Canada while they were so far from home. Such was case for the beginnings of the Commonwealth Club in 1962. Expatriates living in a country so far from home, wanting to remember and celebrate their traditions. Fast forward to 50 years later and it becomes clear the literature reviewed, touched on many key issues that face the Club and many other membership clubs across the United States. The literature regarding membership retention provided a very good insight into factors affecting membership levels and some proactive measures to stem the further loss of members.

When tying the various literature together, it is not only important to understand, the somewhat uncontrollable external factors affecting the membership levels: Economic downturns, overbuilding, competition, aging membership, and generational preferences, but also to identify what factors are controllable from an internal standpoint. This includes; product factors, such as club perception and satisfaction what the Club offers the membership. Gaining a better understand of the membership, the affiliation factors and the reasons why members join clubs helped to define the means to retain members. One might negatively refer to the affiliation reasons as factions or cliques within an organization, and it must be determined if they are helpful or hurtful to the organization. Key components of affiliation factors are length of membership and perceived reputation within the organization. Additionally, the participation factors, or the amount of engagement members have in their club must be identified.
While a dated piece, Fost’s findings on Generation X, not joining the same clubs as their fathers, is an important consideration when examining membership growth and retention and is worth of identification when conducting further research on this topic. Finally, from a proactive standpoint Rotary suggests reviewing with members any potential reasons which may cause them leave the organization; which provided the rational for the survey to be distributed to the membership.

Review of the literature from the standpoint of retaining and growing volunteerism, provided key factors to consider when understanding the reason why people volunteer. Okun provided six classifications of the reasons for volunteering: Values, social, protective, esteem, understanding, and career; the two relating most to volunteerism within the Commonwealth Club are values and social. Recall; values based volunteering is a strong belief in the importance of helping others, while social volunteerism relates to fitting volunteering into ones’ social network. Further breaking down the core motivators for volunteers, it important to understand intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and how they relate to the volunteers within one’s organization. For example, extrinsically motivated volunteers may require recognition or some type of reward to further encourage their help, while intrinsically motivated volunteers are simply interested in helping support the organizations cause. Could this cause conflict within an organization if there were duality in the means in which an organization engages volunteers? This is an important concept to consider when developing a plan to increase volunteerism.

Once the leadership of an organization has a good understanding of who volunteers and what motivates them to do so, the final component, and arguably the most difficult is to find the means to maximize the volunteer’s motivation and satisfaction and prevent volunteer losses. A thorough understanding of Hackman’s job characteristics model, combined with the findings of
Millette and Gagne regarding the relationship between the Hackman models in the volunteer segments, can help to isolate key components for membership organizations. Lastly, use social media as a tool to thank volunteers and help engage more people willing to volunteer. These components and their correlations to volunteerism within the Club and is addressed later in this paper.

In conclusion, the literature proved a valuable amount of information for this researcher to develop a comprehensive survey of the membership on several fronts: Satisfaction, membership renewals and volunteerism. Additionally, based on survey results, this researcher chose to take a more in-depth look at the motivators for volunteers as a part of this literature review, and incorporate those findings into Chapter 5; the summary, conclusions, and recommendations portion of this paper. As mentioned, in a nonprofit organization such as the Commonwealth Club, maintaining and growing membership is extremely important, however, the lifeline is volunteerism.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Approach

Membership declines in the Commonwealth Club have necessitated the need to develop a plan to attract and retain members and increase membership engagement. The plan must include means to measure growth or loss, and identify and analyze the reasons for such.

The primary question addressed in this research is: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain its current membership numbers? While reduced membership creates monetary problems for the Commonwealth Club through the trickle-down effect of less attendance at events, another adverse condition is a reduction in volunteerism. Thus, to develop an answer for the primary questions, the following set of sub questions were utilized to measure the feelings of the membership: 1) Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club? 2) Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed? Additionally, the subject of volunteerism was approached; 3) How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement? 4) What factors may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?

Research for this paper was an evaluation of historical data to review membership levels, and membership engagement, e.g., ticket sales. Additionally, a survey of current members was conducted to identify any dissatisfaction with key areas such as; pricing, service and management. The goal for this papers was two-fold; establish a plan to retain and grow membership, and increase member’s engagement through both event attendance and volunteerism.

Data Collection Approach and Procedures

Data collected. The collected data was used to identify current member dissatisfaction, and to identify potential membership losses. To achieve this objective, the primary source of
information for this research came from a survey distributed to active club members, as well as internal data and documentation. A combination of hardcopy and online survey was used to assure any members who do not have a computer or adequate computer skills may could participate. Those members providing an e-mail address received access to the online survey, the others received hardcopy survey through the mail.

**Primary research question and sub question details**

The primary question for this research is: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain the current membership numbers? From club records, it is documented membership has dropped nearly 50% since 2001, or about three percent of its membership annually. It is important to know basic demographic data in which to categorize the results of the survey. Therefore, several questions contained in the survey collected data such as; member age, membership length, type of membership, country of birth and additional family members who are members. With the collection of the demographic data, research focus also involved the use of the additional sub questions.

The first sub question focused on the satisfaction of the membership regarding various aspects of the organization and is broken into the following categories: membership cost, pricing, food and entertainment quality. The goal was to identify any aspects of the Club current members may find displeasing.

The second sub question focused on whether the membership feel the Club is properly managed by the current Board and whether membership feels the Club and their needs are being fully address by the current Board. Additionally, a question soliciting responses as to what members see as the greatest threat or issue facing the Club was asked.
The third sub question concentrated on club volunteerism and membership engagement. Questions identified those who have volunteered in the past and those who want to volunteer for future events. Volunteerism is a key component to the success of any nonprofit organization, and was a key component of this research.

The fourth sub question concentrated on the factors that may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club. An evaluation of the data gathered from the survey, based on the previously stated questions, helped guide this researcher to discover if there are circumstances within the organization that may perpetuate additional membership losses.

**Data collection Procedures**

**Target Population.** The target population used in this survey was current, active members in good standing; meaning their dues are paid and up to date. Additionally, only members living in Michigan, or with Michigan addresses were included in the distribution of the survey. This eliminated any outlying data on members who may only visit when they are in town. The membership population meeting these criteria is 325.

**Sample Details.** The survey was distributed to the 325 active members. There were 159 respondents for a survey return rate of 48.9 percent. Based on these numbers the confidence level of this data is 95% with a confidence interval of about 5.56. Meaning, this researcher is 95 percent certain, the answers provided reflect the entire population of the organization within +/- 5.56 %.

The surveys were mailed to the home address of the active members. No members of vulnerable populations were included in this survey. Addresses for the mailings were taken from the most current roster and the mailing labels used for newsletter mailing was incorporated to
eliminate hand writing of addresses. A letter from the Board, giving permission to conduct this survey can be found in Appendix A of this paper.

**Instrumentation.** For this research, a 24-question survey was developed by this researcher, and can be found in Appendix C, of this paper. The survey covers the following 8 topic areas: Club Satisfaction, Ticketed Event Satisfaction, Food and Beverage Satisfaction, Club Management, Membership Engagement, Club Growth, and Member Demographic Information. A Final Comments page offers those surveyed a place to add additional commentary, but not required to be answered.

Contained within in the survey are 10 questions with Likert type responses ranging from high to low, a total of four questions required as “yes/or no” response, three open ended questions, and six questions to establish member demographics.

**Procedures.** The survey was either mailed to the member’s home address, as listed in the most recent membership roster and a postage paid return envelope was provided, or emailed to the address provided by the member on their membership information. The survey was anonymous and voluntary, no member was asked to provide their names, or any personal information on the survey, beyond the demographic information, which cannot be tied back to any individual. Additionally, an anonymous blocker was used on the surveys returned by email to further protect the identity those being surveyed.

**Timing.** The timing for this process was as follows: Surveys were emailed or mailed on September 12, 2016, which allowed approximately three weeks for surveys to be completed returned to this researcher. The cut-off date for all retuned surveys was October 3, 2016. Data was analyzed and categorized for three weeks and was completed October 24, 2016.
Data Analysis and Synthesis

Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and central tendencies, mean, median and mode. This researcher has a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt and data analyzed was used to develop a program to help retain membership using the process of DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control). The completed analysis will be presented back to the audience in the form of histograms, charts and tables to help simplify and clarify the survey responses.

Methodological Limitations

Online survey results indicated eight emails, or 5.5% of those emailed “bounced”, due to old or incorrect addresses being used. Additionally, the open-ended questions required this researcher to make estimations and or assumptions when categorizing the responses to “like types” created an opportunity to introduce bias in the answers. Additionally, there are two types of memberships available: Single and Family. Single is self-explanatory, a single person, or only one member of the family who has paid dues. The cost of a single membership is $30 per year. Family memberships are offered to couples and extend to their children over 18 years of age living within the household. Under a family membership, for example, a family with two parents and two college students would have a total of four members under their family membership. The cost of a family membership is $60 dollars per year. For this survey, all active, paid up members were used in the survey, thus, all members of one family received a survey as they are all active members. This may lead to some redundancy in the data collected per the questions asked, however, it is important to get a demographic stratification of the surveyed membership.

Finally, this researcher is a member of the Commonwealth Club Board; all members taking the survey were made aware of this through the cover letter sent in conjunction with the survey. No information regarding the survey was discussed with members, and no personal
interviews were conducted. All replies received through United States mail were opened, and separated from the envelope to assure anonymity. The online results were compiled using an “anonymous filter” to insure members’ names were not divulged.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

This study was designed to answer a primary question and four sub questions regarding the retention of current members at the Commonwealth Club. The primary question addressed in this research is: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain its current membership numbers? To help define membership wants and needs, the following sub-questions were developed.

1. Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club?
2. Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed?
3. How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?
4. What factors may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?

The following results are presented in in both a visual and descriptive evaluation of the data collected.
Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographics. Prior to addressing the Primary and Secondary Research Questions, it is important to evaluate the demographics of the respondents to gain a better insight to the membership make-up of the Club as well as providing a means to stratify the responses of certain questions to such factors as; member age, membership length, and birth country. Therefore, the data presentation and analysis begins with questions concerning membership demographics.

Table 1. Membership Length

![Bar chart showing membership length](image)

The average length of membership is 11-19 years. Responses were well distributed among all the options, with the highest number of respondents coming from the “4 years or less” category and most respondent’s in that category are from the 50-59 years old range. The “30
years or more” was slightly lower, and most respondents in that category are over 70 years of age. Membership length is important as an affiliation variable, which is a means of identification for members of clubs. Regardless of age, people join to be associated with the perceived characteristics of an organization, however as tenure lengthens, their feelings move more towards the goals and identity of the Club. (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1984). A high response rate from newer members identified their willingness to be associated and engaged with club functions.

Table 2. Age of Membership

The Club has an aging membership with almost half of those members responding to the survey being over the age of 70., and three quarters of the members responding are over 60. As identified in the literature review, one of the most prevalent issues facing membership clubs is
the aging of its membership. Clubs with predominately older members lose members through death, health or financial reasons or those who leave for warmer climates. (Duke, 2009). This attrition rate must be considered when identifying threats to the future of the Club and developing plans to overcome those losses must be addressed.

Table 3. Country of Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q23. What is your country of birth?</th>
<th># Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England/UK</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine different countries are represented by those responding to this question. Most those were born in the United States, and comprise more than those from the remaining countries combined. This identified a huge shift from when the Club was founded in 1962 as a social club for expatriates from the England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Thus, when identifying future direction, the current ethnic make-up is important to understand as well as the historical significance of the British heritage of the Club. Typically, members join a social club based on several identification factors of the club they are joining, so it would appear despite the multi
ethnic groups identified, British heritage is the component in their choosing to join the Commonwealth Club (Ferreira, 1996).

**The Primary Research Question: How can the Commonwealth Club retain members?**

Four questions of the 24 questions in the survey address the primary research question: One question asked respondents if they intend to renew their membership. Another asked how many times they visited the Club within the last year. Did the membership feel it was important the Club gain members, and as a follow up question; is it important new members maintain traditional Club values.

Table 4. Membership Renewal

![Table 4. Membership Renewal](image)
Overwhelming, 92% of those members surveyed, strongly agree they plan to renew their memberships. While the renewal responses provided positive numbers and the level of dissatisfaction was nearly nil, the age of the membership must be factored in to accurately gauge the potential for member losses.

As a preemptive measure and in lieu of an exit survey for those members who do not renew their membership, those members who chose “Somewhat Agree, or Strongly Disagree” as their response were asked to provide reasons for their choice. Two respondents provided comments:

Comment 1: “I have not been attending during this past year, and have other commitments”.

Comment 2: “(The) Commonwealth Club used to be a fun evening out with the British Comedy shows. Everyone used to be friendly as we were all pretty much from England. Now I find I that being single and going down there, I find that if you are not part of a group they don’t ask you to sit with them. That was the old Commonwealth Club I used to know and love”.

A third comment was received from a member who “Somewhat Agreed” they would renew their membership, but only “(if the) Commonwealth Club remained a venue for darts”.

Table 5 details the number of Club visits in the last year by the survey respondents. When looking at this data combined with other demographic variables such as member age and length of membership, the following results are found: Members who visit more than 20 times per year are mostly over 70 years of age and have been members for between 20-29 years. Those who visit between 11-19 times per year are mostly over 70 years of age and have been members for over 30 years. Most of the members visiting between 5 -10 times are over 70 years of age and have been members for less than 4 years. Finally, those who visited 1-5 times last years are mostly between 60-69 years old and have been members less than 4 years. Members between 50-59 visit the club between 11-20 times per year, and have been members for 11-19 years. The data
identified longer term members using the facilities more often than those with shorter lengths of membership.

Absent from this is data indicating members under 50 visit the Club at a regular interval. This could be expected as those under 50 represent only about 13% of the respondents, but certainly identifies generational gaps in the membership, and must addressed to engage younger members.

Table 6. Importance of New Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question was purposely written to identify members personal feeling about future membership growth, by asking if it was important to *them* the Club gains members. As indicated by Table 6, the clear majority of those responding, felt gaining new members was important to *them*. This is positive because it identified members see the Club as an entity they want to
continue, with or without them. Of the four members who replied “no” to this question, two were over 70 years old and 2 were between 60-69 years of age, all had different membership lengths ranging from less than four years to more than 30 years and did not visit the Club on a regular basis. As with question 13, the membership engagement is influenced by factors such as club perception, affiliation, and participation and were identified by Ferreira. This researcher agrees, most of the members embrace future growth.

Table 7. Club Values

As a follow-up to question 17, members were asked the importance of new members holding British traditions as a core component of their membership. Nearly 80% percent of those
responding felt it was important that new members maintain these British values and traditions. Though, it should be noted, it is not mandatory in becoming a member of the Commonwealth Club. There were two comments regarding this topic from members who agreed; however, they also added: “within reason” and “somewhat”.

When identifying these answers through the demographics of age and membership length, the largest groups who said “yes” to this question were over 70 years old and had less than 4 years of membership length. Those identifying “no” as an answer were mostly over 70 years old and had over 30 years of membership length. For those less than 50 years old, it was more strongly supported by 11 to 1. Reasoning for this question was to gain an insight to current member’s feelings about the historical significance of embracing British traditions and is reinforced by Ferreira (1996) in the literature review concerning club perception and affiliation. The findings support the perception or idealism of new members wishing to uphold traditions, regardless of their age. Whereas longer term members are more interested in affiliation factions, and their standing within an organization.

**Sub Questions**

The following sub questions were used to establish an instrument is which to derive solution to the question, through an aggregation of the responses: Are members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club? Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed? How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement? What factors may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?
Table 8. Club Satisfaction

As illustrated in Table 9, most those responding “Strongly Agree”, or “Somewhat Agree” they are satisfied with the Club overall. Most those strongly agreeing are over 70 years old with over 30 years of membership length, and those somewhat agreeing are mostly over 70 years old and have less than 4 years of membership length. When identifying younger demographics, members under 50 were closely split between strongly agreeing and somewhat agreeing by a margin of 7 to 5. The group responding neutral to this question are mostly 70 years of age and are split between membership lengths of 11-19 and more than 30 years. Further investigation into member visits identifies those strongly agreeing visit the Club more often that those somewhat agreeing. It appears members with longer tenure visit more often and are more satisfied than those with shorter tenure.
Members were asked if they felt the price of their membership was good value. Most members responded either “Strongly agree”, or “Somewhat agree”. While the results are similar to overall club satisfaction; in the case of membership value, many more members strongly agreed. Members who strongly agreed are mostly over 70 years old, with more than 30 years of membership length and visit the club more than 20 times per year. Those who somewhat agreed are mostly over 70 years old and have been members more than 30 years, however they do not visit the club as often. Data identified the members who visit more often are more satisfied with membership cost than those who visit less.
Table 10. Ticketed Event Quality

Members were asked to rate the quality of entertainment at events in which a ticket purchase was required. Most those responding chose “Satisfied” as their response, However, the other responses were varied. The mean, median and mode scores for this question are 4, which was lower than the other questions.

This indicates a large shift in satisfaction from other questions and should be further investigated. As with other demographic splits, those over 70, with the longest tenure comprised most respondents for the very satisfied and satisfied responses. It should be noted, no respondent under 50 were very satisfied. Additionally, there was a high number of those who responded
“Neutral”, were predominantly over 70 years old, with 20-29 years of membership length, and visited the Club between 11-19 times in the last year.

In the final comments, two respondents identified the reasons neutral scores for these question is they do not attend ticketed events. Four members chose “Dissatisfied” as their response, two of those members provided the following comments:

Comment 1: “Some entertainers (1-4) person group have not been good. They look and sound terrible”.

Comment 2: “More current entertainment may help draw some younger people/members”.

There is a drop in overall satisfaction levels regarding the quality of entertainment at the Commonwealth Club. Based on the data, this drop cannot be clearly attributed to a demographic or preference, but rather it appears to encompass the entire pool of respondents. These responses should be considered when identifying groups for future entertainment events.
Table 11. Price of Ticket Satisfaction

Members were asked to rate their satisfaction with the pricing of tickets for entertainment events, and similarly to entertainment satisfaction, a greater number of members were “Satisfied” than those who were “Very satisfied”; however, the gap closed from the previous question. Most members who are very satisfied are over 70 years old, have more than 30 years of membership length and attended the Club more than 20 times last year. Those members choosing satisfied, are over 70 years old, have been members for longer than 30 years, and visited the Club between 11-19 times last year. As with the previous question, scores were lower and varied; the mean, median and mode scores for this question were mean 4.07, median and mode 4. Additionally, there was a high number of members who responded “Neutral”. This
group is predominately over 70 years old with less than 4 years of membership length, and visited the Club more than 20 times last year. In the final comments two respondents identified the reasons neutral scores for these question is they do not attend ticketed events.

Again, it appears those members using the Club more often, are more satisfied. However, regardless of Club usage, ticket pricing is based on factors such as meal type and cost of entertainment. With an aging membership, mostly on fixed incomes, cost is a major concern to them and becomes a critical item for management to be aware of and to control.
MEMBERSHIP DECLINE AND RETENTION

Table 12. Food Quality

Members were asked to rate the quality of food served at ticketed events. Responses were split closely between “Very Satisfied”, or “Satisfied”. Once again, there was a high number of those who responded “Neutral”. A demographic breakout of the responses for each answer choice, show the responses of were split very closely along all the following lines: member age, length of membership and Club visits. No additional data is available to discern why the answers are such, although, it may simply be personal preference. One respondent noted in the final comments section that fresh food should be used instead of frozen for meals at ticketed events.

This topic is identified in the literature review. Members who are retired may visit less often, or spend less on the occasions they visit (Ferreira, Maier, and Johanson, 2012).
Additionally, the consumption behaviors of these customers change; they switch to cheaper alternatives and want a better value for their money.

Table 13. Beverage Pricing

The Commonwealth Club has well stocked bar facilities that include four types of imported draft beer, many domestic and imported bottled and can beers, as well as many wine and liquor options and soft drink options. When asked about beverage pricing satisfaction, over half of the respondents were “Very Satisfied” and just over one third were “Satisfied”. Three members were “Dissatisfied” with beverage pricing; of those, one member was previously chose dissatisfied with ticket pricing. Based on the data received, the membership is satisfied with the pricing structure for beverages.
The Commonwealth Club is managed by a Board consisting of 11 positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Membership Secretary, Hall Manager, Newsletter Editor, Building Manager, Entertainment Chairperson, Ticket Chairperson and Public Relations Chairperson. Currently, only eight of those positions are filled.

Members were asked if they felt the Club was a well-managed organization. Over 57% respondents “Strongly Agreed”, and over 32% “Somewhat Agreed”. The only key demographic difference of the groups responding was those members with longer tenure (more than 30 years), strongly agreed, while those with shorter tenure (less than 4 years), somewhat agreed, or were neutral that the Club was well managed. So, why is there a difference between the two
demographics? It could be one group simply do not feel the Club is well managed. However, this researcher believes different; longer term members have seen many different boards over the years, have volunteered and been past Board members themselves. They have a better basis to make a judgement. Newer members may be unaware of the history of the Club, or are not engaged enough to understand the work required to manage an organization. For example: Of those with less than 4 years of membership length and choosing satisfied as their response, only 2 have volunteered in the past. There were very few follow up comments to this questions, with none showing dissatisfaction for the Board, while of the most responses received praised the work done by the Board. This topic is further identified in the responses to question 24.
Table 15. Responsiveness of Board

As a follow-up to question 8, Members were asked to rate the responsiveness of the Board to any issues or concerns voiced by the membership. Nearly 80% of those responding felt the Board was either “Extremely Responsive”, or “Very Responsive”. Approximately 20% felt the Board was “Moderately Responsive”. There was a high rate of skipped answers on this question, with relatively no explanations or comments. It should be noted that one member did explain they skipped the question because they do not interface directly with board members and this researcher believes this is the case for most of those members skipping the question. Those members responding moderately responsive, are slightly younger,
visit the Club less often and have shorter membership lengths than those responding, extremely or very responsive. Half have volunteered in the past, yet only about 15% wish to volunteer in the future.

There is no clear reason for the number of moderate scores, however, based on the volunteerism drop, there may be dissatisfaction with the Board in that regards. It is likely the reduction in traditional events due to cost constraints, has impacted this score. For example: the annual picnic has been cancelled, and some British ethnic events have been cancelled due to poor attendance. These comments are noted in the responses to question 24.
Table 16. Threats to Club Future

Members were asked to identify what they perceived as the greatest threat to the future of the organization. The top three responses comprised over 52% of all respondents and identified the aging of the membership and a lack of younger members as the greatest threat to the future of the Commonwealth Club. This was followed closely by a lack of membership participation at events, and by the loss of members. The age of the membership falls in line with the data that indicates nearly 50% of the members are over 70 years of age. Membership engagement is low, and this is further discussed later in this data analysis, however this researcher agrees this was correctly identified as a top threat. Finally, a lack of membership engagement can be implied when noting the number of members who did not respond to this question.
Table 17. Information Sources

Q11. Which of the following is your primary source of information regarding the Commonwealth Club?

Answered: 155  Skipped: 4

To measure the effectiveness of club communications, members were asked to provide their primary source of club information. Most of those responding identified the mailed newsletter as their primary source. The option for “Other” received over ten percent of the responses (16); when asked to specify, member provided the following information: 7 members stated they receive an e-mailed newsletter. 6 members stated “word of mouth” was their primary source of information. 1 member stated receiving most of their information as a board member.
Due to the age of the membership, and a lack of technical skills or a computer, mailed newsletters are the favorite source of information. Members have the option of requesting a mailed newsletter or receiving an electronic version at the time of their renewal.

Table 18. Club Appearance and Maintenance

Most respondents, felt the Club was “Extremely well”, or “Very well maintained “, while about 30% percent felt the Club was “Somewhat well maintained”. As identified by Ferreira (2007), reduced membership and club income negatively affect the budget for building maintenance. Maintenance is an important factor when considering hall rental income and the overall perception of the Club to members and visitors. There were many comments regarding
this topic in the responses to question 24, and range from new décor, updating the restrooms and parking lot.

Table 19. Volunteer History

Table 19 indicates the responses when members were asked if they ever performed volunteer work for the Club and which tasks they performed. Of those responding, over 63% had never volunteered, while 36% percent had volunteered in one form or another.

Those who have volunteered in the past are mostly over 70 years of age, been members for over 30 years and used the Club between 11-19 times in the past year. Based on the written responses, is important to note; the time frame of those responding yes, can range from as far back as 40 years ago, to the current date. Thus, the 36% does not directly relate to the number of volunteers today. Internal documentation identifies the current levels of volunteers at about 15
people, most of whom work fish fry, plus 8 Board members. These are the two major areas of volunteerism within the Club and is confirmed when viewing the next table regarding tasks performed. Much of the literature reviewed dealt with volunteerism and helped identify the types of people who volunteer, and the motivations involved in maintaining volunteers.

Table 20. Volunteer Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteers Positions</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Help</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean up / Decorating</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison / Event coordinator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar Staff</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The members that previously volunteered were asked what functions they performed. Most of those who responded worked the weekly fish fry (18) people, followed by those who were Board Members (14). A high number of those responding (12), did not wish to divulge the type of volunteer work they performed. For future planning, the development of tasks that motivate volunteers based on the Hackman and Oldham job characteristics model (Daniel, 1998) and Okuns work with young-old volunteers (1994), is critically important to motivating and retaining volunteers. Working the fish fry, volunteers are helping to make money for the Club, they interface directly with members and visitors, see a project from start to finish and the results of their work.
Table 21. Volunteer Interest

When asked if members are interested in volunteering for future events, over three quarters of the respondents answered “No”. Of those members not wanting to, or unable to volunteer in the future, 31 had previously volunteered, most are over 70 years of age. There are 79 respondents who have never volunteered and do not wish to volunteer, the majority of them are over 60 years old. The drop in those wishing to volunteer can be directly attributed to the aging membership. As mentioned in the analysis of the previous question, this is a critical area for the survival of the organization and this topic is further addressed later in this paper.
Table 22. Recruitment Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Mission Statement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Dart Presence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Membership Relations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Fee Reduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek Children of Original Members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Drive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit at Ethnic Festivals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertise / Social Media</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold an Open House</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question #18 was an open-ended question soliciting ideas for membership recruitment. 39 members or 24% of those surveyed responded. Advertising through social media or traditional means received the most suggestions with nine, while some type of membership fee reductions received the next highest at six. Increasing traditional events and increasing the membership relations both received five suggestions. As indicated previously, the lack of response to open ended questions identified a lack of engagement on the part of the membership.
Table 23. Membership Type

![Bar chart showing membership types with 40% single and 60% family memberships]

40% of club members have single memberships, while 60% have family memberships. As identified earlier in this paper, family memberships include all members of a household over the age of 18. Further breakdown of the membership is identified in the next question.
Table 24. Additional Family Members

Members were asked to identify additional family members belonging to the Commonwealth Club. Of those responding, the clear majority are members with their spouse. Nearly 14% identified their children as a member, while approximately 10% percent identified their parents as members. Only five respondents (4.95%) identified having a sibling as a member, while almost 10% identified their extended family as a member.

There was a high number of members who skipped this question (58), possibly due to their status of having a single membership. However, this researcher was unable to confirm this.

Apart from those members who join with their spouse, there are 39 members or 12% who indicate they have other family members at the Commonwealth Club. This data suggests few
children of members join themselves and is backed up by information from the literature review. Tompson, Koutroumanis, Brownlee & Hoke (2014), identify the generational preferences as key reasons for lack of second or third generation members, as well as Fost (1998), who cited the marketing techniques of club to the continued same demographic as a key component in the inability of club to engage younger members.

**Question 24**

**Areas of Dissatisfaction or Areas to Improve**

**Commonwealth Club Experience**

Question 24 was an open-ended question asking the membership to clarify any “Dissatisfied” responses they may have had in the survey. Additionally, the members were asked to identify areas that may improve their, or others experience at the Club. Many of these responses were cross tabulated into previous questions analysis requiring responses. To better clarify the responses, this researcher as segregated (as best as possible) these comments into eight “like” groups based on their content, however some comments cross over into multiple topics.

1. Board:
   
   a. “Club is worn but clean. Current Club Officers are great!”
   
   b. “Everyone doing a good job.”
   
   c. “I am satisfied with the way the club is run.”
   
   d. “We fish fry servers have asked several times for the cup holder trays to be cleaned, as they are filthy, and this has not happened.”
   
   e. “Should have a choice of "does not apply". For instance, I never have any need for the board. Additionally, I am not British so I have no idea about British values”
f. “Develop a way to compensate bar volunteers as members don't tip generously”.

g. “Need to recruit the people who keep attending the club but won't join. Enforce the three-visit rule.”

2. Food:
   b. “Friday fish fry is an important outreach to the community - time to get people in that aren't aware we exist. Taylor is a wonderful replacement for the bar. It takes friendly people to keep up morale and have visitors want to return.”
   c. “I would like more food/snacks available on non-event nights.”

3. Cost:
   a. “Should have a discount for members at ticketed events.”
   b. “Membership cost - too cheap.”

4. Entertainment:
   a. “We really need to bring the St George's Night party back. I realize it's a lot of work, but it's a unique English experience. Our first-generation Brits won't be with us forever- this helps to maintain/introduce the culture.”
   b. “Have not had much British type of events. Not a lot on the calendar of interest. Club is a great club to go and socialize. A place woman can go and feel comfortable and safe.”
   c. “Some entertainers (1-4) person group have not been good. They look and sound terrible.”
d. “Miss special events evenings. St Georges night. Burns dinner, St Patrick’s, etc.”

e. “More current entertainment may help draw some younger people/members.”

5. Maintenance:

a. “Purchase large screen TV. Purchase tables and chairs that are current and comfortable. Look at options interior decorating that maintain the British Pub look updated.”

b. “I know we are landlocked, but it would be nice if there were more handicapped parking spaces and if the restrooms were accessible (doorways and stalls too small or wheelchair, walker access) Know this is a costly item. Thanks to all the volunteers. Really appreciate all the work that goes into making the Commonwealth Club great.”

c. “Parking is my only complaint at the club, it has gotten better over the past year but it would be a much-needed improvement if the lot behind Kenny's wine shop could be leveled and paved or black topped. Keep up all the great work that has been addressed in the past year.”

d. “I think updates (decor) are important, fresh (not frozen) food for special events. I think a more diverse board is important, too much family really just makes it a board of limited input!”

e. “I would like to see an improvement in the men's room.”

6. Communications:

a. “In the newsletter, nothing ever mentioned that the club is open Wed. Night. Ladies play darts, we could also use this night for cards - Euchre, etc.”
b. “I still do not understand if there are standard hours of if they are only open for an event. If I pop in during an event to have a drink, do I pay a ticket fee, if I am only in the lounge? Can I bring guests with me? Also, maybe all members / customers could be treated equally, not serve "the board" before anybody else. Sometimes it seems like if you are not one of a few select families, you are not as welcome.”

7. Why Members Do Not Visit:
   a. “In Q 6 I chose neutral as I don’t attend ticketed events. You didn’t ask about Fridays, which are outstanding.”
   b. “Unable to drive.”
   c. “For Q 4,5,6 I put neutral because I have not been at a special event in years, so I don't know. The quality of food for weekly dinners is satisfactory.”
   d. “No dissatisfaction. I would suggest you asked why or why not we visit. My time is limited and distance to club make the visit an event that is worth the travel. Hope to experience more of your regular venues.”
   e. “My husband and I enjoy the Club and the food. I had a weekend-only job for the last 6 years, and we were not able to come as often.”

8. General Comments:
   a. “It would be nice if members were more friendly towards new people. I was a member in the 70's, but now when I rejoined after being divorced, you go in and if you are on your own they don't ask you to go and sit with them. That's how the British used to be. Now they are all in little groups.”
b. “This club was formed by English friends as a social club. It was and is still to some known as an English club. What happened to Welsh, Scots, and others that used to be a big part of the social make-up of the club? Several times a year the club puts on a great dinner, which is enjoyed by all. Have a membership drive showing the good side of our club.”

c. “Having been a CC member since 1963. It has always been a home away from home. I am very proud to be a member, to see a small machine shop holding 68 people what it is today. The people that started the venture, sadly have passed on. However, after some ups and downs we are still surviving. We are not a bar!! We are a club. We must make it clear to all new members that this is a British Club. However, all are welcome.”

d. “Most members are pretty old.”

e. “Stop having a clique in the back room during events.”

f. “No dissatisfaction but feel it has become a one generation club - and that generation is now too old, retired out of state, or have unfortunately passed away.”

The previous comments provide an insight into the varied amount of responses received for this question. While there were few clarification of any previous dissatisfied answers, the comments ranged from advice for future survey structure, to valuable input, to observations and to personal gripes. This researcher identified a strong need for entertainments events to focus back on traditional evenings. However, it needs to be noted, these evening have been dropped previously due to poor attendance. Other comments of note relate to the need for building improvements in the areas of redecorating, restroom improvements, parking and upgrading
equipment. These are costly suggestions, but perhaps necessary to draw in new members.

Possibly the most telling comment of all is the final one, in which the member laments this may only be a single generation club. This is observation is backed by data found throughout this research.

**Supplementary Data.** Additional data for this research was retrieved through available club records. These records include membership levels as well as membership engagement through attendance at annual meetings and events. Record keeping at the had been inadequate, and this data reflects only information from 2008

Table 25. Membership Levels at AGM

![Membership Levels at time of AGM](image)

Annual membership renewal occurs each September, and coincides with the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Table 26 indicates club membership levels at the time of the AGM
since 2001 (Clark, 2016). As mentioned previously, all board positions are held by volunteers with widely varying skillsets and have resulted in poor record keeping over the years. This researcher could find no membership level data between 2002 and 2007, and a trend line indicates the drop from 2001 to 2008. It is of interest to note; beginning in 2013, the first increase in membership since at least 2001 (per available records) occurred with an increase of 52 members, and continued to increase through 2014 with an additional 59 members, until 2015, when a 48-member decline occurred. There are no exit surveys on place to identify why members leave the Commonwealth Club, and is addressed in the recommendation section of this paper.
Twice yearly, the Board is required to hold a general meeting to report to the membership the financial status of the Club, upcoming events, membership counts and any other related information. Table 27 indicates membership attendance at these meetings. The meetings represent the only times members can voice opinions in an official open forum. Typically, these events are poorly attended, though the AGM generally has more attendees due to fact the elections of Board Members occur on this evening. Attendance as a percentage of the membership for these meetings has ranged from a high of 20% to a low of six percent for the Bi-Annual, and a high of 23 % to a low of nine percent for the AGM. The percentage of those attending to membership numbers, shows large fluctuations, however, when identifying the actual numbers of members attending these events they appear somewhat stable. This researcher believes this is attributed to a core group of the same members attending these events.
Table 27. Ticketed Event Attendance

Table 28 indicates attendance at events since 2014, in which a ticket purchase was required (Vergotte, 2016). All events are open to non-members except for the Members Only Christmas Dinner/Dance. The highest attended events are the Battle of the Band evenings and it should be noted; a high number of non-members attend this event which average 176 attendees. Events featuring a higher number of members attending have much lower attendance numbers. The highest attend of these are the holiday based events, the Christmas and the New Year’s Eve parties which average 86 attendees. The remaining events of the year average about 48 attendees. There is no difference in ticket pricing for members and nonmembers, thus actual numbers of members attending events versus non-members is not readily available.
Data Analysis Summary

The data collected during this research provided an insight to the Commonwealth Club membership, their feelings, wants and needs, and was helpful in answering the primary and sub questions. The following is a brief recount of the data and how it related to the questions. Chapter 5 contains the closing comments and recommendations.

Primary Research Question: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain members? Four questions were contained in the membership survey addressed the primary question. The first asked if members intended on renewing their membership. The responses indicate the overwhelming majority of the members would renew their membership. However, this does not preclude membership loss, as nearly 50% of the respondents are over 70 years of age. Member’s Club use was identified when asked how often members visited the Club. Most the responses identified members attending an event at the Club at least once a month in the previous year. The clear majority of members felt the it was important to them (as members), the Club gained new members, and that those new members should maintain the British values and traditions that founders instilled.

Secondary Research Question 1: Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club? Member satisfaction levels were measured from an overall Club satisfaction level to more specific areas such a membership cost, event cost, entertainment and food quality, and beverage pricing. Overall most members strongly agree they were satisfied and felt the membership cost was a good value. However, when asked about entertainment cost and quality, the trend shifted to satisfied, which identified an area of concern for this researcher. Members were split between
very satisfied and satisfied for food quality. Finally, most members indicated they were very satisfied, or satisfied with beverage pricing.

**Secondary Research Question 2: Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed?** Nearly 60% of the members responding felt the Club was well managed and over three quarters felt the Board was extremely or very responsive to their needs and concerns. There was a high number of skipped responses to this question, and a possible explanation for this is could be those members felt they had no direct contact the Board.

**Secondary Research Question 3: How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?** Data indicated roughly one third of members had volunteered in the past, and one quarter of those who responded are interested in future volunteering. Additionally, on average, approximately 50 members attend the various ticketed events throughout the year. Both sets of data indicate a lack of engagement from the membership and are key issues that should be addressed. This question cannot be directly answered by the data collected, however, it reinforced the premise there is work to be done in this area and is addressed in the recommendations portion of this paper.

**Secondary Research Question 4: What may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?** Membership age is likely the main reason members leave the Club. This comes in the form of health, financial, or relocation reasons. While any of these reasons could occur to any age group, the literature specifically attributed most membership club loses to an aging membership. However, there is no membership loss data to support this in the case of the Commonwealth Club. The data collected identified membership satisfaction, and a high number of members planning to renew their membership. High levels of dissatisfaction were not
encountered in the survey, however some key trends need to be addressed before they become larger problems, such as: entertainment satisfaction and ticket pricing.

Chapter 5 provides the summary of the research, draw conclusions and provide recommendations to the Board. The objective is to effectively retain and grow the membership and, member engagement and volunteerism.
Chapter 5: Summary Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

This paper began with a comprehensive explanation of the Commonwealth Club, its origins and history of the organization, the stewardship and identified the reason for the need for this research to take place. The purpose of this research was to identify and answer the primary question: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain the current membership numbers? To address the primary question, this researcher developed the following set of sub-questions:

1. Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club?
2. Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed?
3. How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?
4. What may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?

Summary

This portion of the research paper summarizes the literature reviewed, the results of the membership survey and additional internal club data. This researcher evaluated the above-mentioned data collected and compared it to the research question and sub questions, then used that information to make informed recommendations to the Commonwealth Board to develop retention and recruitment plans moving forward.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This researcher learned almost immediately when embarking on the literature review, the case of the Commonwealth Club is not unique. For a myriad of reasons, including: an aging demographic, economic downturns or lack of interest from younger generations, membership clubs are struggling to retain and grow their memberships.
Perhaps the most prevalent issues facing membership clubs is the aging of its membership. Many organizations have older, founding members who pass away, or leave due to health or financial reasons. Some traditional clubs require new members to be sponsored by a current member, but is problematic because the Clubs continue to market to the current membership demographic (Duke, 2009). As older members leave an organization, for whatever reason, there are not enough younger members to backfill the losses.

The literature identified the reason why many Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, never joined the same social clubs their fathers did. Thus, the aspect of reinventing an organization to adapt to an ever-changing demographic is now common practice among social clubs, particularly as the preference gaps seen between Baby Boomers and their Traditionalist parents continue to be seen by following generations and their parents (Fost, 1996). Club managers must understand the needs of their current membership: the product factors, the perception about the Club and what it offers the membership. Affiliation factors, length of membership and reputation within the organization, and participation factors, the amount of individual membership usage of the Club or its facilities (Ferreira, 1996). The data in the research has validated this through the identification preferential differences between those members with short and long membership lengths, regardless of member age.

The importance of understanding what motivates volunteers and keeps them engaged was identified through additional literature review. Intrinsic motivation, is engaging in volunteerism for its own sake, because of the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from doing so. Extrinsic motivation, is engaging in volunteerism for a reward, or acknowledgement (Millette & Gagne, 2008). Additionally, six classifications of motivation were identified by Okun (1994) Values, social, protective, esteem, understanding, and career.
Finally, it is important to design tasks to keep volunteers engaged. Hackman and Oldham developed the characteristics model, based on the idea that the task itself is key to employee motivation, and is broken into 5 core dimensions: Skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Within these five dimensions are the characteristics that contribute to job meaningfulness, personal responsibility, and the effectiveness of one’s efforts (Daniel, 1998).

Chapter 4: Data Analysis. Data was collected from the general membership in the form of a 24-question survey. Those members engaged in the survey had their dues paid on time and were in good standing at the time of the survey.

The survey covers the following 8 topic areas: Club Satisfaction, Ticketed Event Satisfaction, Food and Beverage Satisfaction, Club Management, Membership Engagement, Club Growth, and Member Demographic Information. A final comments page offers those surveyed a place to add additional commentary, but not required to be answered.

The abovementioned topic areas were contained within the survey as; 10 questions with Likert type responses ranging from a high of 5 to a low 1. Four questions were “yes/or no” response types. Three open ended questions, and six questions to establish member demographics. Four questions of the 24 questions in the survey address the primary research question: One question asked respondents if they intend to renew their membership. Another asked how many times they visited within the last year. Did the membership feel it was important the Club gain members, and as a follow up question; is it important new members maintain traditional club values.
**Findings.** The following data is presented in the same order as in the Data Analysis portion of this paper. The first data set was the survey response rate, followed by the set of questions related to membership demographics:

**Question 19 - membership length.** The average length of membership is 11-19 years. Responses were well distributed among all the options, with the highest number of respondents coming from the “4 years or less” category and most respondents in that category are from the 50-59 years old range. Membership length is important as an affiliation variable, which is a means of identification for members of clubs. Regardless of age, people join to be associated with the perceived characteristics of an organization, however as tenure lengthens, their feelings move more towards the goals and identity of the Club. (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1984). A high response rate from newer members identified their willingness to be associated and engaged with club functions.

**Question 21 – age of membership.** The Club has an aging membership with almost half of those members responding to the survey being over the age of 70., and three quarters of the members responding are over 60. As identified in the literature review, one of the most prevalent issues facing membership clubs is the aging of its membership.

**Question 23 – country of birth.** Nine different countries are represented by those responding to this question. Most those were born in the United States, and comprise more than those from the remaining countries combined. This identified a huge shift from when the Club was founded in 1962 as a social club for expatriates from the England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Thus, when identifying future direction, the current ethnic make-up is important to understand as well as the historical significance of the British heritage of the Club. through affiliation, (Ferreira, 1996).
The Primary Research Question: What can the Commonwealth Club to retain current membership numbers? The following questions were used to identify four keys points in membership retention. Did current members plan to renew their membership? How often did they visit the Club? Did they feel new members were important the Club? Is it important new members hold the same traditional British values as current members?

Question 3 – membership renewal. Nearly all members surveyed, strongly agree they plan to renew their memberships. While the renewal responses provided positive numbers and the level of dissatisfaction was nearly nil, the age of the membership must be factored in to accurately gauge the potential for member losses.

Question 13 - member visits. Members who visit more than 20 times per year are mostly over 70 years of age and have been members for between 20-29 years. Those who visited 1-5 times last years are mostly between 60-69 years old and have been members less than 4 years. The data identified longer term members using the facilities more often than those with shorter lengths of membership. Absent from this is data indicating members under 50 visit the Club at a regular interval. This could be expected as those under 50 represent only about 13% of the respondents, but identifies generational gaps in the membership.

Question 16 - importance of new members. The clear majority of those responding, felt gaining new members was important to them. This is positive because it identified members see the Club as an entity they want to continue, with or without them.

Question 17 - club values. Based on the data, it is clear most of the members responding feel this an important aspect of both the Club and its membership. Nearly 80% percent of those responding felt it was important that new members maintain these British values and traditions. Ferreira (1997), identified perception and affiliation as reasons for joining social clubs. When
identifying these answers through the demographics of age and membership length, the largest
groups who said “yes” to this question were over 70 years old and had less than 4 years of
membership length. Those identifying “no” as an answer were mostly over 70 years old and had
over 30 years of membership length. For those less than 50 years old, it was more strongly
supported by 11 to 1.

**Sub Questions.** The following sub questions were used to establish if members are
satisfied with the Commonwealth Club? Does the membership feel the Club is properly
managed? How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership
engagement? What factors may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club? Descriptions
of some these responses are brief, as they are overwhelmingly positive, then further addressed in
the conclusion and recommendations portion of the paper. Other results were further analyzed.

**Question 1 - club satisfaction.** Data identified most members, nearly 93% are satisfied
with the Commonwealth Club overall. Further investigation into member visits identifies those
strongly agreeing, visit the Club more often that those somewhat agreeing. It appears members
with longer tenure visit more often and are more satisfied than those with shorter tenure.

**Question 2 - membership value.** While the results are similar to overall club satisfaction;
in the case of membership value, many more members strongly agreed. Data identified the
members who visit more often are more satisfied with membership cost than those who visit less.

**Question 4 – Ticketed event quality.** Most those responding chose “Satisfied” as their
response, and indicates a large shift in satisfaction from other questions and should be further
investigated. As with other demographic splits, those over 70, with the longest tenure comprised
most respondents for the very satisfied and satisfied responses. No respondents under 50 were
very satisfied.
**Question 5 – Price of ticket satisfaction.** Responses to Question 5 showed very similar pattern to those in Question 4, with low scores. Over 77% of the membership was very satisfied, or satisfied with ticket pricing, and again, a high number of neutral scores. It appears those members using the Club more often, are more satisfied.

**Question 6 - food quality.** The distribution of member’s responses was like those in Questions 4 and 5, with over 79% of the member responding, being either very satisfied or satisfied, with the quality of food served at ticketed events. Responses of were split very closely along all the following lines: member age, length of membership and Club visits.

**Question 7 - beverage pricing.** Based on the data received, the pricing structure is overwhelmingly supported by the membership, with nearly 90% of those respondents being very satisfied or satisfied with beverage pricing.

**Question 8 - club management.** Over 57% respondents “Strongly Agreed”, and over 32% “Somewhat Agreed”. The only key demographic difference of the groups responding was those members with longer tenure (more than 30 years), strongly agreed, while those with shorter tenure (less than 4 years), somewhat agreed.

**Question 9 - responsiveness of board.** Members were asked to rate the responsiveness of the Board regarding club or personal issues brought forth by the membership. When responding, nearly 79% of those responses were extremely responsive, or very responsive”. Additionally, 19% felt the Board was moderately responsive. Those members responding moderately responsive, are slightly younger, visit the Club less often and have shorter membership lengths than those responding, extremely or very responsive.

**Question - 10 threats to club future.** Question 10 was an open-ended question seeking input from members regarding their perceived threats to the future of the organization. Those
who responded, identified aging membership at over 19%, lack of member participation / event attendance at 16% and lack of new members over 15%, as the top three responses. These threats are indeed valid and confirmed by information contained in the literature review which identified reasons for membership losses (Fost, 1996; Ferreira, 2006; Duke, 2009).

**Question - 11 information resources.** The results related to club information sources show the mailed newsletter is the primary source of information used by members, with almost 79%. The Club uses social media such as Facebook and a website, however, given the age of the membership, there may be computer literacy issues, thus making the hardcopy more user friendly.

**Question 12- club maintenance and appearance.** Almost three-quarters of the respondents felt the Club was extremely well maintained, or very well maintained. An additional 27% felt the Club was somewhat well maintained.

**Question 14 - volunteer history and responses.** Nearly 64% of the members responding identified they never volunteered. Of the roughly 36% that had volunteered, the timeframe may go back as far as 40 years, and thus does not give an accurately represent those volunteering today. Current levels of volunteers are about 15 people, most of whom work fish fry, plus 8 Board members. These are the two major areas of volunteerism within the Club and was confirmed in Table 20.

**Question 15 - volunteer interest.** When inquiring about the respondent’s willingness to volunteer in the future, almost three-quarters stated they were not interested in volunteering. Of those members not wanting to, or unable to volunteer in the future, 31 had previously volunteered, most are over 70 years of age. There are 79 respondents who have never volunteered and do not wish to volunteer, most them are over 60 years old. The drop in those
wishing to volunteer can be directly attributed to the aging membership, and possibly a level of burnout.

**Question 18 - recruitment suggestions.** Members were asked to provide suggestions for membership recruitment; 24% of those surveyed responded. Advertising through social media or traditional means received the most suggestions with nine, while some type of membership fee reductions received the next highest at six. Increasing traditional events and increasing the membership relations both received five suggestions.

**Question 20 - membership type.** Among those members responding, membership types are split as follows: Family membership 60% and Single membership 40%.

**Question 22 - additional family members.** 80% of members responding are members with their spouse. Nearly 14% identified their children as a member, while approximately ten percent identified their parents as members. Only five respondents (4.95%) identified having a sibling as a member, while almost 10% identified their extended family as a member. This data confirms the literature review indicating the lack of children who join their “Fathers’ club” (Tompson, Koutroumanis, Brownlee & Hoke, 2014; Fost, 1998)

**Question 24 – additional comments.** This was an open-ended question asking the membership to clarify any “Dissatisfied” responses they may have had in the survey. Additionally, the members were asked to identify areas that may improve their, or others experience at the Club. While there were few clarification of any previous dissatisfied answers, the comments ranged from advice for future survey structure, to valuable input, to observations to personal gripes. This researcher identified a strong need for entertainments events to focus back on traditional evenings. However, it needs to be noted, these evening have been dropped previously due to poor attendance. Other comments of note relate to the need for building
improvements in the areas of redecorating, restroom improvements, parking and upgrading equipment.

**Supplementary Data.**

**Membership levels.** Membership levels have decreased from 654 members in 2001 to the current 336. There is a gap in membership records from 2002 through 2007. Beginning in 2013, the first increase in membership since at least 2001 (per available records) occurred with an increase of 52 members, and continued to increase through 2014 with an additional 59 members, until 2015, when a 48-member decline occurred.

**Membership attendance at annual meetings.** Attendance for The Bi-Annual and Annual General Meeting are relatively consistent. The Bi-Annual averages 40 members attending, while the Annual General Meeting averages 59. The number show little fluctuation when compared to overall membership counts.

**Attendance at ticket events.** Ticket sale data is available from 2014 until present. The highest attended events are those that include a high number of non-members and average 176 attendees. The events featuring a higher number of members attending have much lower attendance numbers. Christmas and the New Year’s Eve parties average 86 attendees, while the remaining events of the year average about 48 attendees.

**Conclusions**

Referring to the primary question: What can the Commonwealth Club do to retain the current membership numbers? It is apparent through the survey data; management has achieved the single most tangible goal required to maintain membership; having a large majority of current members state they plan to renew their membership, though this does not mean the question has been fully answered. With almost 50% of respondents over 70 years old,
membership age is perhaps the greatest factor affecting the future of the organization and ties
directly to the primary question. As indicated by much of the literature review; as member’s age,
they use club facilities less often due to health or financial reasons. Data shows a high number of
older members no longer wish to volunteers. Despite the optimistic anticipation of members
planning to renew their membership, the unfortunate reality is the rate of attrition that can occur
over the next 1, 3, 5 or 10 years, and how to address those membership losses. Also, from a
growth perspective, membership age can negatively impact the ability to market to younger
groups if an organization is perceived as “old”. This is also recognized in the literature review by
identifying the generational gaps and each generation own wants and needs. These needs can
range from spending and eating habits, entertainment preferences, club ambiance, and hours
available to socialize, i.e., maintaining family time. For the Club to successfully gain new
(younger) members, the needs of the varying generations must be met. An indicator that this is
not occurring, is the lack of multigenerational families within the membership.

The following secondary questions must also be answered to fully support and help
maintain the primary question:

1. Are the members satisfied with the Commonwealth Club?
2. Does the membership feel the Club is properly managed?
3. How can the Commonwealth Club increase volunteerism and membership engagement?
4. What may cause a member to leave the Commonwealth Club?

Responding to sub questions 1 and 2; the data derived from the membership survey
provides a snapshot in time which indicates a large majority of members that are satisfied with
all aspects of the Club and feel it is well managed. Sub question 3 required further investigation and is identified in the following two points:

1. Membership Engagement; 2) Volunteerism.

*Membership engagement.*

When evaluating the engagement of the membership, two items of interest are identified in the Data Analysis portion of this paper; Tables 27 and 28. As mentioned earlier, the Club holds two “member-only” meetings annually to report status to the membership and to elect new board members, the Bi-Annual and the AGM. Table 27 is attendance at these two meetings. It should be noted the AGM is better attended than the Bi-Annual due to Board elections. Rather than looking at the attendance as a percentage of all members, this researcher identified a consistent attendance rate from 2009 forward, noting 2015 as an exception. Therefore, it appears the attendance does not necessarily change at annual meetings as membership numbers increase, or drop. Without the attending member’s names, it would be difficult to attribute this to a core group of members who support these meetings. However, it seems the attendance numbers do not appear to be positively or negatively influenced by overall membership counts. Thus, indicating a certain apathy among the remaining membership.

The second item; Table 28 is attendance at ticketed events. Twice yearly the Club hosts a Battle of the Bands, which over the past two years has averaged 176 attendees, however, most those attending are nonmembers (Vergotte, 2016). In contrast, two holiday based events, the Members Only Christmas and New Year’s Eve averaged 86 attendees over the past two years. The remaining 10 events averaged 48 attendees with few being nonmembers (Vergotte, 2016). Again, it appears the attendance does not necessarily change at ticketed event as membership levels increase or drop.
Based on this data, this researcher identified a lack of engagement from the membership at both annual meetings as well as scheduled events throughout the year. The event attendance data appears contradictory to the responses received from the satisfaction portion of the survey pertaining to ticketed events.

Sub question 4 asked why a member would leave the Commonwealth Club. The number one reason would be the members age, yet, this is a more uncontrollable circumstance than perhaps a member leaving because of dissatisfaction or a grievance. Currently, there is no mechanism in place to solicit reasons when members fail to renew, making this a difficult question to address. Additionally, while they are very low percentages, some dissatisfaction was noted in the survey, though only three members had negative responses when asked if they would renew their membership.

**Volunteerism**

Question #14, and 15 related to membership volunteerism and were contained in the survey because volunteers are an important aspect of any nonprofit. The trend is somewhat concerning when identifying the lack of members wishing to volunteer. A cross tabulation of the responses identified only 21 out of the 56 members who have volunteered in the past, wish to remain volunteering. While identifying members, who have never volunteered but wish to do so in the future, the number is 17. Compiled, a total of 38 out 159 respondents (24%) wish to volunteer.

When viewing the age demographic of past and future volunteers, data identified 65% of those no longer wanting to volunteer are over 70 years of age, while 82% of new volunteers are under 70, and 41% of new volunteers are under the age of 60. Additionally, the membership length demographic is important to review; data identified 46% of those no longer wanting to
volunteer have been members for over 30 years, and 70% have been members over 20 years. Conversely, 47% of new volunteers have been members less than 4 years and 70% have been members less than 10 years. It appears, based on the data, the Club is losing older volunteers overall, but have a younger generation willing to step into their place. However, the overall numbers of volunteers are down from past years.

**Recommendations**

As a long-term solution to the areas identified in the conclusions portion of the research paper, this researcher recommends a DMAIC (Define; Measure; Analyze; Improve; and Control) approach to continuously improve member satisfaction, retention, create growth, engagement, and volunteerism. It should be noted: as a continuous improvement tool, DMAIC will overlap into the future research portion of this paper with the Define (D) portion of DMAIC occurring in recommendations, and the (MAIC) portions as a part of future research. From that perspective, the membership survey used in this research is the first step to define the scope of the future research surveys. Recommended areas to consider are: Membership Age, membership drop off factors, levels of volunteerism and the engagement of membership for events and activities.

The short-term recommendations are to increase membership engagement and volunteerism. The first step is to identify the members who have never volunteered, yet wish to. Based on data from the survey there are at least 17, potentially 30 (when projected across the entire membership), relatively new members of the willing to do so. This is important as the new volunteers may have a fresh idea, while long time volunteers, including board members may be suffering from some degree of burnout.

The use of sub-committees, preferably cross-generational, should be encouraged and used to plan and stage events that support the multi-generational preferences. Ideally, there would be
multiple committees working in parallel on individual events. This serves a twofold purpose; The members now have ownership in the process, which creates greater engagement, while expanding the Club offerings to a more diverse membership audience. Generational gaps were identified in the literature review, and identified the gaps seen between Baby Boomers and their Traditionalist parents continue to be seen between Baby Boomers and those in Gen X, and Y. The gaps are seen within the Commonwealth Club as well.

It is important to know the motivation for whom Okun referred to as the young-old, those between 60 and 74 years of age, as this is the volunteer demographic for the Commonwealth Club. Okun found the major reasons for elder volunteerism were; To help others, to feel useful or productive and to fulfill a moral obligation. Thus, when soliciting for volunteers, the Board needs to understand what motivates, or may demotivate these people. To better engage volunteers, task description and training should be provided to volunteers and an emphasis the importance of volunteers, should be relayed to the membership as often as possible. This researcher suggests using the newsletter or social media to acknowledge who volunteered and what they did. In addition, create a volunteer of the month award.

*Future Research Suggestions*

From the previous section, “MAIC” is addressed in this section. For the Measurement phase: Member demographic data should be collected at the time of renewal or when a new member joins the Club, and should include: Age, birth country, number of times visiting the Club in the previous year. Additionally, a check box identifying if the member would like to volunteer at club events, with all “yes” responses forwarded to the Hall Manager.

At the other end of the spectrum; Develop an exit survey to collect data on why members are leaving the Club. This can either be a fill in the blank response, or checkboxes indicating
dissatisfaction with issues such as: Cost of membership, entertainment, food, beverage prices, or written personal reasons as responses. This researcher has found open ended responds question can be difficult to segregate, and would recommend the checkbox method.

Management should analyze the data on an annual basis, and refer to the baseline survey, or preceding survey to gauge progress. Is the Club gaining members and are they being retained? Are demographics shifting to a younger membership? Is there better attendance at events? If any answers are unsatisfactory, the improvement phase comes into play as ongoing feedback is received and deficiencies are identified and addressed with contingency plans.

The final stage, Control, is to define and validate the benefits from the previous steps. It would behoove the organization to begin the entire DMAIC process over again due to the variability of social club members and external factors.
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Appendices

Appendix A  Permission to Conduct Study
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Appendix A

Permission to Conduct Survey

The Commonwealth Club
30088 Dequindre Road - Warren, MI 48092-1811 - (586) 751-9560 - www.CommonwealthClubMI.com

September 2, 2016
Steven J. Hanbury
29741 Mackenzie Circle W
Warren, MI. 48092

Dear Steven Hanbury

We have reviewed your request to conduct a research project involving the Commonwealth Club of Michigan and the survey and data gathering required for this endeavor. We feel that this project will be beneficial to The Commonwealth Club and will provide the Executive Board a valuable insight into future planning for the Commonwealth Club. You have the permission of the Executive Board to distribute a survey, and gather historical data relating to the Commonwealth Club.

The following stipulations should be observed: Please be mindful of the member’s personal privacy. I also ask that the results be shared with the Executive Board and the general membership at the first available Annual or Bi-Annual General Membership Meeting.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of approval, please give me a call at 586 751-9560.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Stephen Barber
President,
The Commonwealth Club
Appendix B

Transmittal Letter/Survey Instructions

The Commonwealth Club
30088 Dequindre Road - Warren, MI 48092 - 1811
(586) 751 - 9560 - www.CommonwealthClubMI.com

Good day,

My name is Steven Hanbury, the Public Relations Chairperson at the Commonwealth Club, and a graduate student at Central Michigan University. For my final project, I am examining membership retention at the Commonwealth Club. I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached survey. You are receiving this letter because your membership status is listed as “Active”, and were randomly drawn from a pool of approximately 320 other active members.

The current Board is actively working to determine the best direction for the future of the Club, and would like to ask if you would be willing to participate in the included survey. We are very interested in understanding more about your time at the Club. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and return the completed questionnaires in the included pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. I would most certainly appreciate if you could respond no later than October 3, 2016.

The data collected will provide useful information to better understand the Commonwealth Club membership and their needs. Furthermore, the information will allow the Board to develop an action plan for maintaining current membership numbers, while working to grow our membership base and increase members’ engagement. Results of this study will be presented to the general membership at the first available Bi Annual or AGM. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below.

Please note that if you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the MSA Program by calling 989-774-6525 or addressing a letter to the MSA Program, Rowe 222, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

Sincerely,

Steven Hanbury
Public Relations Chairperson, The Commonwealth Club
586 482-7143

Dr. Patricia Kelley
Central Michigan University
Appendix C

Survey/Interview Questions

Commonwealth Club Membership Survey

Please take a few moments to complete this survey, it should take no longer than 10 to 15 minutes. Your time is greatly appreciated.

The survey is broken into 8 short sections, with instruction at the beginning of each section.

Commonwealth Club Satisfaction

Please rate your level of agreement for the following aspects of the Commonwealth Club

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the Commonwealth Club
   ○ Strongly Agree
   ○ Somewhat Agree
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat Disagree
   ○ Strongly Disagree

2. Commonwealth Club membership cost is a good value
   ○ Strongly Agree
   ○ Somewhat Agree
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat Disagree
   ○ Strongly Disagree
3. I am going to renew my Commonwealth Club membership

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Ticketed Event Satisfaction

*Please rate your level of satisfaction for the following aspects of the Commonwealth Club*

4. Quality of entertainment at ticketed events

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

5. Pricing for ticketed events

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied
Food and Beverage Satisfaction

*Please rate your level of satisfaction for the following aspects of the Commonwealth Club*

6. Quality of food served at ticketed events
   - Very Satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - Neutral
   - Dissatisfied
   - Very Dissatisfied

7. Beverage pricing
   - Very Satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - Neutral
   - Dissatisfied
   - Very Dissatisfied

Commonwealth Club Management

*Please rate the following. For question 10, please write your response in the lines provided.*

8. I Feel the Commonwealth Club is a well managed organization
   - Strongly Agree
   - Somewhat Agree
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
9. Overall, how responsive has the current Board been to your questions or concerns regarding the Commonwealth Club?

- Extremely Responsive
- Very Responsive
- Moderately Responsive
- Slightly Responsive
- Not at all Responsive

10. What do you see as the greatest issue/threat facing the Commonwealth Club?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

11. Which of the following is your primary source of information regarding the Commonwealth Club?

- Facebook Page
- Website
- Mailed Newsletter
- Club Bulletin Board
- Other _______________________________

12. How well maintained are the Commonwealth Club facilities

- Extremely well maintained
- Very well maintained
- Somewhat well maintained
- Not very well maintained
- Not at all well maintained
Membership Engagement

Please respond as applicable to the following questions

13. In the past year, how often did you visit the Commonwealth Club?

- 1-5 times per year
- 6-10 times per year
- 11-20 times per year
- More than 20 times per year

14. Have you been a volunteer at the Commonwealth Club?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, what did you do?

________________________________________________________

15. Are you interested in volunteering for work at the Commonwealth Club?

- Yes
- No

Commonwealth Club Growth

Please respond as applicable to the following questions

16. Is it important to you the Commonwealth Club gains new members?

- Yes
- No
17. A core value of the Commonwealth Club is: “...the preservation and demonstration of British traditions”.
Is it important to you new members support and maintain the Commonwealth Club traditional values?

○ Yes
○ No

18. Do you have any suggestions for membership recruitment?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

The following information will be used to create a demographic model of the Commonwealth Club membership. The information you provide is anonymously and cannot be tied to any individual person.

Member Profile

19. Approximately how long have you been a member?

○ 4 years or less
○ 5-10 years
○ 11-19 years
○ 20-29 years
○ 30 or more years
20. Membership Type

- Single
- Family

21. Age?

- Under 40
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- 60 to 69
- Over 70

22. Other family members who are Commonwealth Club Members (Mark all that apply)

- Spouse
- Parent(s)
- Siblings
- Children
- Extended Family

23. Your Country of birth

_____________________________________________________

Final Comments

24. If you expressed dissatisfaction in any previous area of the survey, please elaborate. Or, if the survey has not touched on a topic that is important to you and/or your experience at the Commonwealth Club, please list here: