Examining Travel Motivations of Visitors Attending a Professional Golf Tournament

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**Introduction**

Sport and tourism bring people together and can be an instrument of change (Rifai, 2010). Sport tourism can be defined as individuals who actively or passively participate at a competitive sporting event (Robinson and Gammon, 2004). Scholars assert that there is a distinction between individuals who travel to actively participate in a sport and those who travel to watch a sports event (Gibson, 1998; and Standeven and De Knop, 1999). In the United States, event sport tourism generates $27 billion a year (Travel Industry Association of America, 2001). Consequently, event sport tourism researchers have also explored the behavioral differences of fans traveling for sporting events (Tassiopoulosa and Haydamb, 2008; and Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak, 2003). Thus the need to study the travel demands of individuals that attend sporting events is imperative when communities decide to develop the niche tourism segment.

Hilton Head Island, SC is often considered a leading US golf destination. According to McDonald (2005), it is one of the top golf destinations listed in various print publications. In 2006, Golf Digest identified two of the area’s golf courses on the list of the top 75 courses in the US. One of the courses listed by Golf Digest is home to the Hilton Head Island Heritage Golf Tournament. The tournament generates almost $84 million year in revenues for the Hilton Head Island, South Carolina community. Since 1969, it has been hosted by Hilton Head Island and has drawn hundreds of thousands of spectators. The tournament generates close to $1.5 million for local charities each year. Similar to Tassiopoulos and Haydamb (2007), we were interested in exploring what tournament attributes and destination...
characteristics are considered important to the golf spectator. Therefore, we investigated for the unique tournament and destination attributes that are deemed important by professional golf spectators. However, we examined if similarities existed among those tournament and destination attributes. Lastly, we also explored for significant differences among the spectators that concurrently played golf at the destination while viewing (as fans) the week-long sporting event. The research implications provide insight for sport and event organizers of professional and amateur golf tournaments within golf destinations.

**Review of Literature**

**Destination Attributes**

There appears to be general agreement regarding the destination attributes considered attractive (Gearing, Swart, and Var, 1974; Lue, Crompton, and Stewart 1996; and Lew, 1987). Researchers have identified five types of general destination characteristics: (1) natural resources; (2) cultural and social characteristics; (3) sport, recreation, and educational opportunities; (4) shopping opportunities and commercial facilities and; (5) accommodation and infrastructure facilities (Lue, Crompton, and Stewart 1996).

Destination attributes alone are not only responsible for pulling visitors to the community. Researchers have identified other trip decision factors that motivate travelers. Tideswell and Faulkner (1999) identified five factors that influenced one’s destination trip decision: (1) multiple-benefit seeking, encompassing situations, (2) heterogeneity of preferences, (3) risk and uncertainty reduction, (4) economic rationalism, and (5) visiting friends and relatives. Tideswell and Faulkner’s “Factors
Associated with Travel Motivation Model, also presented constraint/opportunity factors such as travel arrangement, destination familiarity, travel time, and mobility, and spatial configuration. They suggested that both the predisposed factors and constraints overlap and their research showed that the overlapping factors predicted the number of overnight stops within an international destination. Therefore, tourists select vacation locations based on a mixture of attributes that fit in either one or more of the factors.

**Sport Event Tourism**

Over the last five years, more than 75 million adults report attending a sport event as either a participant or spectator (Travel Industry Association of America, 1999). According to Getz (1998) when defining sport event tourism two perspectives must be considered: (1) sport event tourism is travel for the purpose of participating in or viewing an event, and (2) sport event tourism is the development and marketing of sports to obtain economic benefits. Chalip and Costa (2005) asserted that sport events are used to build the brand of the host destination. The events can play multiple roles in brand management such as providing destination co-branding opportunities, extensions of the destination brand, or accenting features of the destination brand. Additionally, Deery, Jago, and Fredline (2004) stated that sport tourism has become the subject of an increasing level of both academic and government interest.

Much research looks at certain factors related to sport tourism. Studies have looked at the difference between people attending an event and people participating in the sporting event and their motivations in each case respectively (Gibson, 1998;
and Standeven and De Knop, 1999). However, researchers have also analyzed sport tourist’s motivations when choosing a destination and posited that there are too many motivation variations to list (Robinson and Gamma, 2004). Finally, some have investigated the utilization of sport tourism as a community economic development tool. Bull and Weed (1999) looked at developing sport tourism options on a small island, while Lim and Patterson (2008) explored the impact of an international golf tournament held on a Korean Island. While both agreed that there were large economic advantages, it came with intrinsic hardships not limited to environmental deterioration and over reliance on this particular industry.

Factors of sport trip influence have been outlined by Sirakaya and Woodside (2005), and divided into the following four categories: (1) internal variables (attitudes, values, lifestyles), (2) external variables (pull factors of a destination), (3) Nature of the intended trip, and (4) trip experiences (feeling during, and post trip). To give further direction to the topics of external variable, Kurtzman and Zauhar (2005) identified four categories of travel motivators that could be linked specifically to sports travel: (1) physical motivators (directly related to physical needs), (2) Cultural motivators (linked to traditions, such as hall of fames), (3) interpersonal motivators (socialization potential), and (4) status and prestige motivators (demonstrated by people enticed by athletic celebrities and distinctive sporting events).

The Heritage Golf Tournament spectators can be posited to be most motivated by status and prestige, as it is considered a “Hallmark Event” as defined by Getz (1997). A “Hallmark Event” is one that poses significance, in terms of
tradition, activeness, image or publicity that the event provides the city, community or destination with a competitive advantage. As such, spectators are motivated by a subset of sport travel motivators making it harder to zero in on one trip decision-making factor. Ottevanger (2007) best said it in his thesis defense, the explanation of why people to actively or passively participate in sports, together with several touristic motives for travel illustrates the difficulty and variety in sports tourism.

While there have been studies conducted on tourist motivations, few have looked at additional destination attributes that draw tourists to the event location. More specifically, few have explored the differences between active sport participants and non active sport participants attending a professional sport event. Therefore, the following questions were developed:

1. What tournament and destination attributes are most important to visitors that attend a professional golf tournament?
2. Are there shared similarities among the golf and destination attributes that can lead to greater efficiencies when planning a professional golf tournament?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of attribute importance when comparing golf fans that play golf during the tournament week to golf fans that don’t play golf during tournament week?

**The Hilton Head Island Heritage Golf Tournament**

The Heritage golf tournament is held annually on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina and was first played in 1969. The week-long event is hosted by the island during the spring months. The tournament is sanctioned by the Professional Golf
Association (PGA) and is South Carolina’s only professional golf event. The 2010 total purse for the tournament was $5.7 million, with a top payout of $1.6 million. Since 1987, the Heritage Foundation, which currently organizes the event, had distributed approximately $19.5 million of the tournament proceeds in the form of charitable donations to the Hilton Head Island community. In 2009, $1 million was donated to art organizations, medical institutions, and college scholarships. On average, approximately 135,000 people attend the week-long tournament.

**Methodology**

Surveys were collected using SNAP software and were administered using touch-screen polling stations at both the main entrance and between the 1st and 9th holes. The polling stations were open all days of the tournament. To insure as random of a sample as possible, students were used to approach every tenth person that crossed a line determined by researchers until the polling stations were full. There were over 2,100 individuals who completed the survey, with 1,850 surveys being useable for this analysis.

Twelve tournament and destination attributes were identified by both the local chamber of commerce and the organizers of the PGA Heritage Golf Tournament. The 12 attributes measured were: (1) location, (2) travel distance, (3) community fundraising, (4) professional golf (i.e. tournament field), (5) fun, social atmosphere, (6) family oriented activities, (7) timing, (8) dining options, (9) accommodation options, (10) daytime activity/entertainment options, (11) nighttime activity/entertainment options, and (12) cost (to travel and attend event).

Though the list of attributes was developed by the sport event organizers, the

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attributes were very similar to destination attribute and constraint/opportunity items measured in previously published research.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of each attribute using a 5 point Likert scale: 1=Not at all Important; 2=Slightly Important; 3=Important; 4=Very Important; 5=Extremely Important. Descriptive statistics were used to rank order the golf and destination attributes from most important to least important, while factor analysis was conducted to explore for similarities among the 12 attributes.

To examine for the frequency of golf rounds played by professional golf fans attending the tournament, a question was asked investigating the amount of rounds played during the tournament week: “How many rounds of golf will you play in the area during the 2010 Verizon Heritage tournament week?” The respondents were asked to indicate the amount of rounds played on a 5-point scale: 1 = no rounds of golf played, 2 = one round played, 3 = two to three rounds played, 4 = four to six rounds played, 5 = six or more rounds played.

In order to compare the importance of attributes by number of golf rounds played by spectators, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted along with post hoc comparisons using the Fisher LSD test. Lastly, demographic data (age, education level, income, and origin of permanent residence were collected). This analysis includes data only collected from domestic and international visitors and not permanent residents and non-resident property owners.
Results

Heritage spectators tend to be older (over 60% are 55 or older), males (53%), well educated (64% have a bachelors degree), and have high incomes (55.5% reported incomes of $100,000 or more with 17.4% of those respondents reporting incomes of $200,000 or more). Permanent residents made up 39% of respondents, non- residents property owners (with a permanent residence outside of Beaufort County, SC) made up 21.2% of respondents, and visitors (permanent residence outside of Beaufort County, SC) made up 39.7% or respondents.

Heritage spectators are a loyal crowd. 15.7% of individuals surveyed indicated that this was their first time to attend the tournament, 27.9% have attended 2-5 times, 18.2% have attended 6-10 times, and 16% have attended 11-20 times. The average number of days the spectators attended the tournament was 3.36 with 48.1% of respondents attending four or more days.

The descriptive statistics indicated that of the 12 attributes, professional golf was very important. However, location, fun atmosphere, timing, cost, travel distance, accommodation options, and dining options were slightly important. Daytime and nighttime activities, family activities, and community fundraising were of little importance to the visitor spectators.
Table 1: Importance of Destination Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional golf</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (Hilton Head Island)</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun, social atmosphere</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing (spring)</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (to travel and attend event)</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel distance</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations options</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining options</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daytime activity / entertainment options</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nighttime activity / entertainment options</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-oriented activities</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community fundraising aspect of event</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance Scale:**

1=Not at all Important; 2=Slightly Important; 3=Important; 4=Very Important; 5=Extremely Important

The leading tournament attribute most important to sport event tourists was the field of professional golfers, while the tournament’s Hilton Head Island location and the fun and social atmosphere were also important tournament attributes.

Destination attributes were not rated as important when compared to tournament characteristics, however the “constraint/opportunity” factors such as cost to travel and attend the event, and travel distance from the visitor’s point of origin were most important destination attributes.

Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalization was used to explore for similarities among the attributes. The analyses showed that the 12 constructs could be reduced to two prevailing factors. Location, travel distance, community fundraising, and fun social atmosphere loaded on one factor, while family oriented activities, dining options, accommodation options, daytime activity options, nighttime activity options, and cost to travel to and attend event...
loaded on the second factor. Spring (timing) loaded on both factors. Table 3 indicates the dimension loadings as well as Chronbach’s Alpha for each dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place Attributes</th>
<th>Non-tournament destination characteristics</th>
<th>Tournament destination characteristics</th>
<th>Eigenvalues</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Chronbach's Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daytime activity/entertainment options</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>32.42</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomodations options</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining options</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nighttime activity/entertainment options</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family oriented activities</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel distance</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>28.27</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (HHI)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional golf</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun, social atmosphere</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (to travel to and from event)</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community fundraising aspect of event</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.
Timing crossloaded on two factors

Four hundred twenty-nine respondents answered the item that inquired about the number of rounds played during the week. Forty-eight percent indicated that they would not play golf, while 52% stated they would play golf one or more times during the tournament week. Table 2 below indicates frequency of respondents and number of rounds played.

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Table 2: Number of golf rounds played

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many rounds of golf will you play in the area during the 2010 heritage week?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two - Three</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four to Six</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six or More</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-way ANOVA was used to explore for differences among spectators who played rounds of golf during the tournament golf tournament. The number of rounds played by visitors was the independent variable, while the attribute level of importance was the dependent variable. The test indicated that significant differences existed among the tournament attendees that played golf within the destination during tournament week. The five groups did significantly differ for three of the 12 attributes: professional golf, $F(4,551) = 2.99, p = .018$; accommodation options, $F(4,567) = 2.53, p = .039$; and daytime activity / entertainment options, $F(4,569) = 1.82, p = .000$. The post hoc examination indicated that level of importance for professional golf increased for those that golfed one to three times during the tournament week. Accommodations were most important for those that golfed four to six times when compared to all other golfers and non golfers. Lastly, daytime activities were most important for those that golfed four to six times during the tournament.

**Conclusion**

Sport event tourism is often used as a destination development strategy. Many communities have incorporated sport event tourism tactics with hopes of...
increasing visitor market share and visitor length of stay. Communities that host professional golf tournaments often understand the economic contribution to the region but rarely investigate the golf and destination characteristics that are viewed as important by the sport event visitor.

This research indicates that the field of professional golfers is most important for visitors that attend a professional golf event. More specifically, tournament characteristics prevail among the attributes measured showing that visitors to a professional golf tournament are rate the tournament attributes higher than destination characteristics. Additionally, the attributes can be categorized according to two factors: (1) non tournament destination characteristics, and (2) tournament destination characteristics. A possible result of the factor examination can be that the host destination can cluster and position itself separately from the tournament attributes. This strategy might elevate visitor interest to the tournament by those that are not specifically motivated to attend the sport event however are stimulated by characteristics of the host community. For those visitors that are more interested in the tournament, the host destination should advertise the field of professional golfers that has been chosen to play the event.

Lastly, those visitors that play golf during the tournament week rate the field of professional golfers, accommodations, and daytime activities as more important when compared to non-golfers. The implications of the ANOVA can lead to host communities focusing on developing activities peripheral to the event itself such organized golf skill challenges for fans and opportunities to interact with the professional golfers. Additionally, for the golf fans that play golf the variety of

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accommodation options should be made salient with hopes of enhancing their motivation to attend the event.

The research indicates to organizers that not only are tournament characteristics important to professional golf spectators, but the access to golf is important as well. More specifically, the destination and the tournament are inextricably related. With 52% of the visiting spectators indicating that they will play golf during their stay, destinations that host professional tournaments should seek to add value to the spectator stay by having a golf course inventory that encourages spectator play during the tournament week. This will make the destination more attractive to the attendee of the tournament and also provide additional income to the destination through increased tax revenues related to course play. Therefore, the professional golf tournament has an impact from both the sport spectator market and golf participant market.
Bibliography


