Examining the Impact of Motivation, Service Quality, and Value on Satisfaction and Loyalty Among Golf Tourists to Rural Areas

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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION, SERVICE QUALITY, AND VALUE ON SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY AMONG GOLF TOURISTS TO RURAL AREAS

by

Chad William Maas

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2013
ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION, SERVICE QUALITY, AND VALUE ON SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY AMONG GOLF TOURISTS TO RURAL AREAS

by Chad William Maas

May 2013

Economic development in rural areas has undergone a fundamental change over the past several years as the dependence on agriculture continues to decline in rural economies and rural areas experience depopulation along with an increase of outmigration of educated youth. As a result, tourism has emerged as an alternative economic revitalization strategy in many rural areas. One strategy rural areas have begun to implement to attract visitors to a region is attempting to entice individuals interested in participating in sport and recreation. Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry as more and more destinations attempt to benefit from hosting sport events and providing sport participation opportunities. Within the sport tourism industry the golf travel market has become an important component of the sport tourism market. The increased popularity of golf has created significant economic, social, and environmental impacts on the local communities. The golf market represents a significant opportunity to grow and maintain visitation to a destination as well as generate substantial revenues. Given golf’s ability to attract higher than average spending visitors and generate revenue within a region, rural destinations should be particularly interested in the golf travel market, as visitor spending can represent a significant economic influx in less populated areas. Previous research indicates that visitor loyalty is vital to the long-
term success of a tourism destination. Common variables that have been linked to visitor loyalty include travel motivation, satisfaction, value, and service quality. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that golf tourists’ travel motives, perceived value, and service quality have on satisfaction and loyalty. Loyalty was measured using repurchase and word of mouth intentions. Participants were 228 golf travelers that purchased a rural golf vacation package in the upper Midwest United States. Results indicated that the travel motives of relaxation, social interaction, and knowledge exploration had a significant influence on visitor satisfaction and loyalty, with relaxation accounting for the most variance. Of the three variables satisfaction, value, and service quality, only satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of repurchases intentions. All three variables were found to be significant predictors of word of mouth intentions with satisfaction accounting for the most variance. Both value and service quality had a significant impact on satisfaction, with value having the strongest influence. Market segmentation strategies and appropriate resource allocations are discussed, as well as managerial implications.
The University of Southern Mississippi

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May 2013
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my wife, Courtney, for all of your love, support, and understanding throughout this entire process; it would not have been possible without you; to my children, Raegan, Grant, and Grady, for their patience and understanding while I was working and away from home; to my parents and in-laws for their never-ending support and accommodations; to my grandparents for their encouragement and inspiration.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Economic development in rural areas has undergone a fundamental change over the past several years as the dependence on agriculture continues to decline in rural economies and rural areas experience depopulation along with an increase of outmigration of educated youth. Tourism has emerged as an alternative economic revitalization strategy in many rural areas as a result (Gannon, 1994; Greffe, 1994; Lane, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000; Luloff et al., 1994; Marcouiller, 1997). Tourism has been seen as a clean attractive source of employment with the potential for many economic spinoffs in many rural regions (Luloff et al., 1994). There is nothing to suggest that tourist activities in rural areas will not continue to increase. A vital question needs to be answered: How can tourism services and products offered in rural areas increase the number of visitors and maximize the amount of local spending so that tourism can serve as an engine for development, income, and employment in rural regions (Greffe, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000)? One strategy rural areas have begun to implement is attempting to attract individuals interested in participating in sport and recreation activities (Costa & Chalip, 2005).

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry as more and more destinations attempt to benefit from hosting sport events and providing sport participation opportunities (Chalip & Leyns, 2002; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003; Kim & Chalip, 2004). Since the late 20th century there has been a growing demand for active vacations. According to Gibson (1998), 22% of travelers indicate that sport participation opportunities are important when selecting a
vacation. It is estimated that sport tourism is responsible for almost 30% of tourism-related revenue in the United States (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005). According to Hudson (2003), sport tourism contributes approximately 1-2% of the gross domestic product in most industrialized countries while general tourism contributes around 4-6%. Sport tourism has evolved into a significant realm of tourism due to increased mobility of sport enthusiasts, enhanced communication technology, increased media exposure of sporting events, and increased sport participation opportunities. (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005).

Within the sport tourism industry the golf travel market has become an important component (Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2002). There are now almost 16,000 golf courses in the United States with approximately 27 million golfers. In addition, golf participation is expected to continue to increase in the coming decade. The increased popularity of golf has created significant economic, social, and environmental impacts on the local communities (Beditz & Kass, 2010; Lee et al., 2011). Golf tourism can bring money into a community in a variety of ways that benefit both golfing and non-golfing businesses. Golf travelers spend money in a variety of ways such as travel expenses, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment in addition to their golf related expenses. It has been found that travelers who play golf spend more money visiting a region than those travelers who do not play golf (Hutchinson et al., 2009). Many rural areas are also beginning to realize the benefits of golf tourism, as it has been found that the rural landscapes often provide unique golfing experiences and opportunities that golf travelers are seeking (Costa & Chalip, 2005: Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008a). It has been suggested that golf’s ability to attract certain types of visitors may lead to higher returns for a tourism destination. The golf market represents a significant opportunity to grow
and maintain visitation to a destination, as well as generate substantial revenues (Hennessey, Yun, MacEachern, & MacDonald, 2007). Given golf’s ability to attract higher than average spending visitors and generate revenue within a region, rural destinations should be particularly interested in the golf travel market, as visitor spending can represent a significant economic influx to less populated areas.

Purpose of the Study

Tourist destinations today are facing intense competition as destinations attempt to reap the economic benefits that can come with successful tourism marketing. As the golf travel market continues to expand, an increasing number of travel destinations are offering attractive, all-inclusive golf packages in an effort to capitalize on the increasing golf tourism market (Hutchinson et al., 2009). As the golf industry has become more competitive, managers have recognized the need for effective marketing strategies, especially in niche markets such as all-inclusive golf packages (Lee et al., 2011). Tourism has often been seen as a driving force for regional economic development. Successful tourism marketing can lead to increased retail receipts, income levels, and employment rates (Chen & Tsai, 2007). This could be especially beneficial for those attempting to market golf in rural areas where tourist spending can represent a larger stimulus to the local economy as compared to urban areas with more sources of economic input (Greffe, 1994; Scott & Turco, 2007).

As rural areas continue to attempt to increase tourism as an economic strategy, the challenges of tourism management will only continue to rise in the years to come as managers struggle to develop appropriate marketing strategies to attract visitors (Chi & Qu, 2008). This is true in the sport tourism market as well. In order to gain the economic
benefits related to sport tourism, it is essential to gain a better understanding of what motivates travelers to visit a destination and what influences tourists to be loyal to a destination. It has been well established that it is more efficient to retain an existing customer than it is to attract a new one (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). By developing an understanding of what precedes visitor loyalty and retention, better marketing efforts and services can be designed to match tourists’ wants and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin, Brady, Tomas, & Hult, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Lowering customer defection rates has been shown to be profitable to organizations even more so than market share, unit cost, and other factors associated with financial success (Zeithaml et al., 1996). This concept of consumer loyalty can also apply to tourism and destination marketing. In the field of tourism, visitor loyalty is most often seen as the intention to re-visit a destination or recommend the destination to others. By understanding what influences destination loyalty, tourism managers can estimate post-purchase behaviors and use that information in their decision-making to improve the financial efficiency of the organization by most appropriately allocating resources (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This has been shown to be especially important to rural regions attempting to market tourism as budgets may be more limited than those in more traditional tourism destinations (Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010; Greffe, 1994).

Increasing visitor satisfaction is one way to increase retention among tourists (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This has also been shown to be true in sport tourism and among golf travelers (Hennessy, Yun, MacEachern, &
MacDonald, 2007; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Petrick & Backman, 2002b, 2002c). Understanding the variables that can increase customer satisfaction is crucial for financial success of sport tourism destinations. Variables that have been suggested to increase visitor satisfaction include service quality and value (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hennessy et al., 2007; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004). It has also been shown that offering quality services is a key component of customer satisfaction and retention in the golf industry (Hennessy et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2011) as well as in rural tourism (Albacete-Saez, Fuentes-Fuentes, & Llorens-Montes, 2006).

It has been suggested that no study of visitor satisfaction is complete without a thorough examination of visitor motivation (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Motivation is a dynamic concept that may vary from person to person and from destination to destination (Crompton, 1979; Usyal & Hagan, 1993). Because motivation is such a dynamic concept, an understanding of visitors’ travel motives is vital to designing and marketing the tourism experience (Kozak, 2002). The willingness of sport tourists to travel depends somewhat on what they hope to gain out of the experience. Understanding these expectations is essential to attracting sport tourists to a destination (Kim & Chalip, 2004; Snelgrove, Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2008), especially in rural regions (Devesa et al., 2010). By understanding what it is sport tourists are hoping to gain from the travel experience, tourism managers will be in a better position to develop marketing strategies that will attract visitors who are likely to be satisfied by the travel experience and in turn, more likely to remain loyal to the destination.
Research on the golf travel market is an emerging segment of the tourism field. As rural regions continue to diversify their economic base, golf tourism can provide a unique market for rural tourism developers to explore. Golf, as with all niche products, can play a significant role in positioning a destination in the marketplace (Hennessey, MacDonald, & MacEachern, 2008). The purpose of this study is to better understand what motivates golf travelers to purchase a golf vacation package in a rural setting and examine the role that motivation, service quality, and value play in a golf traveler’s satisfaction and loyalty.

Research Hypotheses

This study will be guided by the following research hypotheses:

H$_1$: Satisfaction will have a positive effect on future intentions.

H$_2$: Value will have a positive effect on future intentions.

H$_3$: Service quality will have a positive effect on future intentions.

H$_4$: Value will have a positive effect on satisfaction.

H$_5$: Service quality will have a positive effect on satisfaction.

H$_6$: Motivation factors will have an effect on both satisfaction and future intentions.

Definition of Terms

*Golf Tourism.* Any travel or overnight trip where golf is a primary motivator for travel and a major determining factor in choosing the destination (Kim & Ritchie, 2010).

*Loyalty.* Future behavioral intentions as a result of the sport tourism experience. This can include elements of saying positive things, recommending to others, paying a
premium price, repeat purchase and expressing cognitive loyalty to the organization or destination (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

**Motivation.** A force within an individual that causes someone to do something to fill a biological or psychological need (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005).

**Satisfaction.** Overall pleasure or contentment felt by the visitor. It is the extent to which the travel experience fulfilled the traveler’s desires, expectations, and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002).

**Service Quality.** Global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of service (Zeithaml et al., 1996). The consumer’s overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of an organization and its services (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994).

**Sport Tourism.** Travel away from home for the primary purpose of sport. This can include travel away from home to play sport, watch sport, or visit a sport attraction and can include both competitive and non-competitive activities (Gibson, 2007).

**Rural Tourism.** Tourism taking place outside of an urban area. Rurality is the central unique selling point in the rural tourism experience (Riechel, Lowengart, & Millman, 2000).

**Tourism.** A form of activity that takes place beyond a specific distance from home at a different location from one’s place of permanent residence. It involves the motivations, experiences, and expectations of people travelling and engaging in numerous organizations, agencies, and institutions catering to guests’ needs (Heath & Wall, 1992).

**Value.** Benefits that are received by a consumer in relation to the price paid for a product or service (Zeithaml et al., 1988).
Assumptions

The assumptions of this study were the following:

1. All subjects will give accurate and honest responses to all information asked of them.

2. All subjects will understand the instrumentation utilized and answer questions accordingly.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were the following:

1. The subjects were delimited to golf travelers who had purchased a golf vacation package in a rural area in the Upper Midwestern United States.

2. The subjects voluntarily self-selected to participate in the study by responding to an e-mail message sent to them by the organization responsible for booking the golf vacation packages.

3. The study was delimited to behaviors relevant to recreational golf tourism.

Justification of the Study

The marketing literature has paid much attention to the importance of loyalty and has shown that service quality, value, and satisfaction are all positively linked to loyalty and behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Although a substantial amount of research has been done pertaining to service quality, value, satisfaction, and future intentions in the marketing field, these issues have not been as well researched in the sport services context, particularly the golf industry (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011). While several studies have examined the impact of service quality and value on satisfaction and future intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000;
Hennessy et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2002c; Petrick, 2004), few have simultaneously examined the role of motivation in relation to visitor satisfaction and future intentions (Lee, 2009; Park & Yoon, 2009; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Even fewer have focused specifically on tourism in rural regions (Park & Yoon, 2009).

Studies of motivation and behavior in sport tourism have primarily been devoted to mainstream sports and have focused primarily on the spectator role. Much less attention has been given to individual sports, such as golf, with the primary emphasis on participation rather than the spectator role (Daniels & Norman, 2005). Despite a substantial amount of work on rural tourism and economic development, there is little that has been done to further the understanding of sport tourism in rural areas (Costa & Chalip, 2005). This study will add to the literature by focusing on sport tourism in rural areas, particularly participation sport tourism in the form of golf vacations. It will do so by examining the impact of motivation, service quality, and value on golf travelers’ satisfaction and future intentions.

Three variables have primarily been studied when it comes to understanding what influences customer loyalty and repurchase intentions: service quality, satisfaction, and value (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Zeithaml et al., 1996). It is a widely held belief that improvement of satisfaction and service quality will result in retention and expansion of visitors that will lead to enhanced profitability. Several studies have examined the effect of value, satisfaction, and service quality on such loyalty variables as revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth intentions, and all have been found to positively influence
customer loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al. 2000; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b; Petrick, Backman, & Bixler, 1999; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1996). However, there are few studies of visitor loyalty when service quality, value, and satisfaction are all simultaneously present and even less that attempt to include what motivation might contribute to predicting tourist intentions. In the tourism literature there are studies that examine the effect of motivation and satisfaction on visitor intentions (Yoon & Uysal, 2005), but there few that also include service quality, value, and loyalty.

While the variables of service quality, satisfaction, and value have been studied extensively, there is still little consensus on each and their contributions to consumer loyalty and the causal order of the constructs. Petrick (2004) identified three models within the literature that attempt to explain the relationship between satisfaction, service quality, value, and loyalty. The first is the satisfaction model where value and service quality lead to satisfaction, which in turn leads to customer loyalty. The second is the value model where satisfaction and service quality lead to value and value leads to loyalty. The final model is the service quality model where service quality influences loyalty through value and satisfaction. Each one of the three variables discussed has been shown to be a significant predictor of consumer loyalty throughout the literature, but no single one determinant or explanation has emerged. More research is needed to understand the relationship of these variables and how they lead to increased consumer retention.
While service quality, satisfaction, and value have been well studied in terms of their effect on tourist loyalty, there has been little research done related to the motivations of golf travelers. There has, however, been segmentation of the golf tourism market in other areas such as attitude, golfing frequency, and gender (Gibson & Pennington-Gray, 2005; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Petick, 2002). Considering the breadth of golf products associated with golf travel, segmentation based on motivation appears to be justified (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Motivation has been seen as the driving force behind all human behavior. Travel motives can be used as a basis for market segmentation by providing insight about their customers that can help those destinations promote to appropriate target segments (Crompton, 1979). A destination’s ability to meet tourists’ motivational needs and desires can directly influence their satisfaction with the tourism experience (Lee, 2009). Segmenting golf tourists using travel motivation could provide distinct profiles of those tourists, which could provide the information needed to create marketing strategies for different types of golf tourists within the larger golf market (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Knowing that a relationship exists between satisfaction, service quality, value, and consumer loyalty, any study examining loyalty will provide a much better understanding if a study of visitor motivation is included. Knowing why tourists choose to travel and the needs they are hoping to fulfill allows both researchers and practitioners to better understand and predict future tourism behavior.

As more areas attempt to benefit from golf tourism it becomes critical to develop an understanding of what attracts and retains golf travelers (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2002c). Since the traveling golfer market has been shown to be increasing and substantial, it is believed that a better understanding of potential segments
and their cognitive responses to services would be beneficial to golf destination managers (Petrick, 2002a). With the high costs associated with operating golf facilities it is in the best interest of golf marketers to understand visitor behavior in order to maximize profitability and competitiveness (Hennessy et al., 2007). This understanding can help golf tourism professionals develop more appropriate and effective marketing strategies.

Scott and Turco (2007) pointed out that areas that often benefit the most from sport tourism are small regional or rural settings where visitor spending represents a significant economic stimulus. Knowing this, golf travel packages can prove to be very beneficial to rural economies. By understanding what factors motivate golfers to travel and what factors lead to greater satisfactions and retention, more effective marketing strategies can be developed that can help rural areas capitalize on the economic benefits of golf tourism.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Rural Tourism

Issues of population decline, economic changes, and community regeneration are universal in most rural societies. Many rural areas have suffered from a decrease in population in recent decades as many of the youngest and most educated residents are migrating to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. As a result, this has caused several rural areas’ social climate to erode, economic base to deteriorate, and they have become less desirable areas to live and work as many small towns struggle to maintain their viability (Albacete-Saez, Fuentes-Fuentes, Llorens-Montes, 2006; Bramwell, 1994; Costa & Chalip, 2005; Lane, 1994). Economic development in rural areas has undergone a fundamental change over the past several years. Many rural economies are being forced to become less dependent on agriculture and are in the process of developing a more diversified economic base (Greffë, 1994; MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003; Marcouiller, 1997; Roberts & Hall, 2004; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004). The decline in the contribution of agriculture to rural economies and outmigration of youth has led to an increased interest in tourism for rural communities and whether it can offer new opportunities for economic exploitation of local resources and job creation. For many communities tourism may be one of the few remaining opportunities to enhance the local economy (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Briedehann & Wickens, 2004; Frederick, 1993; Greffë, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000; Luloff et al., 1994; MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004; Wilson, Fasenmaier, Fasenmaier, & Van Es, 2001).
Research has shown that rurality can be a unique selling point for many vacationers. Travelers often look for high quality unspoiled scenery that offers peace, quiet, and personal attention that small-scale rural tourism can provide (Lane, 1994). Bramwell (1994) identified four qualities that rural areas often possess that tourists find attractive. These include relatively low densities of people and buildings, less social and cultural heterogeneity, less economic diversity and relative isolation from economic, social, and political networks. Tourism activities developed around rural areas enable those communities to enjoy economic progress in response to outmigration and decline to the impact of agriculture. Rural tourism can include activities and interests in farms, nature, health, education, adventure, and sport (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Bramwell, 1994; MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003).

One problem with discussing rural tourism is that there is no universally accepted definition of rural. The United States Census Bureau (2010) considers all non-urban areas to be rural, which is any city or area with less than 50,000 residents. Long and Lane (2000) argue that rural is a label that can be self-assigned that reflects a lifestyle desirable for its relative isolation and pace of living. According to Long and Lane (2000) rural can also be perceived as a place of safety surrounded by open space where one is treated respectfully and a like friend. This perception can be used very effectively in marketing recreational experiences that can drive the rural tourism industry.

Tourists to rural areas are often those that have become dissatisfied with the overcrowding and mass development of more traditional forms of tourism (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Greffe, 1994). A major requirement for rural tourism is the ability to provide peace and relaxation in rural surroundings. Rural tourism should be functionally rural,
meaning that it should be based on a rural area’s unique selling points such as small-scale enterprise, open spaces, landscape, nature, or recreational opportunities. In almost every case rurality is central in the rural tourism travel package (Long & Lane, 2000; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004). Rural tourism is a complex multi-faceted activity that can include farm based travel, but is it also comprised of special interest travel for which rurality would add an element of quality to the experience such as ecotourism, climbing, riding, health, sport, and recreation (Lane, 1994).

Tourist activities and attractions in less developed areas stimulate cooperation and partnerships between communities in neighboring regions and serves as a catalyst for economic development (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). Tourism is a relatively easy concept to understand for most of the public and, therefore, will usually generate local support (Frederick, 1993). Rural tourism can also be less costly and easier to develop than more traditional economic strategies such as manufacturing (Wilson et al., 2001). It is also possible that tourist expenditures benefit rural areas more than traditional destinations because it represents a larger portion of the overall economic influx (Devesa et al., 2010; Greffe, 1994). Tourism can have a positive economic impact in areas of otherwise low economic activity. Tourism development means more income for tourist-related businesses such as hotels and restaurants. This increased income tends to be recirculated in the local area, which can lead to more local income as well as jobs (Frederick, 1993; Wilson et al., 2001).

Greffe (1994) identified four distinct benefits that tourism packages can provide rural regions: providing a source of employment and income, forging a chain of activities, exploiting and capitalizing on the countryside or unique landscape, and
stimulating injections of exogenous flows of expenditure to provide traditional multiplier effects. Gannon (1994) also identified a similar set of benefits that rural tourism can utilize: bringing more money into the local economy, creating jobs, increasing community income, diversifying the local economy, attracting additional businesses, fostering community pride, and building up community infrastructure. Wilson et al. (2001) identified 10 factors that are most crucial for successful tourism development in rural areas: offering a complete tourism package, good community leadership, support and participation of the local government, sufficient funds for development, strategic planning, coordination with local businesses, and informational and promotional assistance (convention and visitor bureaus, regional websites, promotions committees, etc.).

While the benefits of rural tourism have been generally recognized, it is also quite clear that rural tourism efforts suffer from a lack of evaluation and monitoring (Luloff et al., 1994). It is of the utmost importance for a rural destination to decide who their target visitors are and how best to attract those visitors. It becomes even more essential in rural areas because financial resources for tourism are often limited (Greffe, 1994). The growth of rural tourism often lies not in attracting a large number of visitors to an area, but rather in targeting an exclusive market that is searching for something unique or different (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006). Research has indicated that rural tourism should not try to be all things to all people, but instead should focus on unique features that set it apart from the competition (Gannon, 1994). Rural communities that are successful with tourism require a community effort. Rural tourism development cannot work without participation and collaboration from businesses both directly and indirectly involved in
the tourism industry (Wilson et al., 2001). In rural areas, regional approaches to marketing have been the most successful. Regional cooperation lowers the overall cost of marketing and reduces the competition among communities for the same tourist dollars (Frederick, 1993). Golf vacation packages have the potential to achieve all of these strategies for rural areas.

Tourism has historically been concentrated in specialized areas such as beaches, lakes, mountains, and major cultural centers, but over time, has developed away from those traditional attractions and into small towns and the countryside. Where natural resources are insufficient to attract tourists, a rural area can focus on activities different from those offered in other areas (Park & Yoon, 2009). A sport that appeals to tourists clearly has the potential to contribute to the economic development of a rural community or region. When a rural area’s local environment enables a popular sport as recreation the opportunity to engage in that sport becomes an attractive attribute for promoting tourism (Costa & Chalip, 2005). According to Roberts and Hall (2004) there are two primary reasons for recreational sport being used to increase rural tourism. The first is low levels of crowding and natural amenities often lend themselves to create conditions that are desirable for sport and recreation. Second, many activities require conditions that are readily available in rural areas. Tourists who participate in sport require a number of tourism services that include accommodations, meals, and shopping. For a sport activity to contribute to the tourism development of a destination the activity must be integrated with other tourism products and services that the destination offers (Costa & Chalip, 2005).
Sport and Golf Tourism

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism market segments and is receiving increased attention for its social, environmental, and economic impact on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). It is no surprise that sport tourism is emerging as a prominent component of many rural economic development plans given its ability to draw visitors to a region (Green & Chalip, 1998; Long & Lane, 2000). Sport tourism has been defined as travel away from home for the primary purpose of sport. This can include travel away from home to participate in sport, watch sport, or visit a sport attraction and can include both competitive and non-competitive activities (Gibson, 2007). Standaven and De Knopp (1999) define sport tourism as all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or organized for commercial or non-commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home. It is widely understood that sporting events and activities contribute significantly to the economic development and tourist traffic in a city or region and are a vital component of destination marketing (Higham, 1999).

Gibson (1998) has identified three categories of sport tourists: event sport tourists, nostalgia sport tourists, active sport tourists. Event sport tourists are those who travel to attend and watch a sporting event. Nostalgia sport tourists are those who travel to visit a sport-themed attraction such as halls of fame or former Olympic sites. Active sport tourists are those who travel to participate in a sporting event or sport-related activity. Active sport tourism has been successfully used as a tool for revitalizing economies in rural areas by creating tourist attractions and services that might not otherwise exist in those regions. Amenities in local communities can be promoted as attractions to active
individuals who are willing to visit rural areas in order to participate in their favorite sporting activity (Costa & Chalip, 2005; Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008b).

Many destinations are realizing the benefits of focusing on active and participant-centered sport tourism. Active and participant sport tourism may include activities such as skiing, golf, tennis, biking, fishing, or running. Active sport tourism activities can be competitive, but the distinguishing factor is usually the recreational aspect. Participant-centered activities often make use of existing infrastructure and workforce and as a result are relatively inexpensive to organize and produce and, therefore, can yield a high cost-benefit ratio. Another common benefit of participatory sport tourism is that these activities attract consumers that generally are seeking to share their travel experience with others, leading to an increased number of visitors to a destination and greater economic stimulus.

There is a trend in the tourism industry toward specialization areas of the sport travel market (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). One of the specialization areas within sport tourism that has gained interest from practitioners and researchers alike is golf-related travel (Henessey et al., 2007, 2008; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Petrick & Backman, 2002b). The golf travel market is a dynamic and growing segment that can be extremely successful and popular when developed and marketed correctly (Hennessey et al., 2007). Golf tourism has been defined as travel or an overnight trip where golf is a primary motivator for travel and a major determining factor in choosing the destination (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Golf tourism, especially in the United States, has received more recent attention because of its size and value. The number of
yearly golf travelers is estimated at approximately 11.4 million with an annual economic impact of $76 billion (Kim & Ritchie, 2010).

With increasing competition for attracting golf travelers to destinations, it is becoming more important for tourism promoters to identify variables that attract and retain clientele to their sites (Petrick & Backman, 2002a). As the golf industry becomes more competitive, managers have recognized the need for effective marketing strategies. Market research becomes a key vehicle for understanding not only the needs and wants of the golf traveler, but also for remaining competitive in the marketplace (Lee et al., 2011). By better understanding the behaviors of golf travelers, destination marketers will be better equipped to develop more appropriate marketing strategies and tailor their products and services to attract new visitors while building and maintaining repeat business (Hutchinson et al., 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Sport participants are often the consumers of sport tourism. Therefore, a theoretical framework that focuses on participants’ psychological decision-making process is needed to examine factors that influence sport tourists’ loyalty to a destination in the form of revisit and word of mouth intentions (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). The current study is framed around the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine the impact of visitor motivation, service quality, and value on visitor satisfaction and loyalty. This model has been successfully tested and deemed appropriate in a variety of tourism contexts (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010; Shonk & Cheladurai, 2009a; Sparks, 2007; Tsai, 2010).
The Theory of Planned Behavior is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) that is designed to predict and explain human behavior within specific contexts (Ajzen, 1985). The theory has been proven in a variety of settings. Research that has utilized the TPB to predict human behavior has included abortion, illegal drug use, election choices, as well as leisure, recreation, and tourism activities (Ajzen, 1988, 1991; Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2009a). The TPB states that an individual’s behavior is best predicted by one’s intentions. According to the theory, planned behaviors are determined by behavioral intentions which are largely influenced by an individual’s attitude toward a behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely actual performance of the behavior is to occur. The TPB assumes that individuals are more likely to execute rather than neglect their intentions.

A central factor in the Theory of Planned Behavior is the individual’s intention to perform a given behavior. Intention is viewed as an immediate antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Intentions are assumed to capture the strength of the motivational factors that influence a behavior and are considered indicators of how hard people are willing to work to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1985, 1988), behavioral intention can only be effective in predicting actual behavior if the behavior in question is under the control of the decision maker. In other words, the person must be able to freely make the decision whether or not to perform the behavior in question. To the extent that a person has the necessary opportunities and resources
(behavioral control) as well as the intention to perform the behavior the individual should succeed at doing so (Ajzen, 1991).

While behavioral control is an important concept within the Theory of Planned Behavior, it is a fairly easy concept to understand. Perhaps of greater interest to the theory is the concept of perceived control, or the extent to which the individual believes he or she controls the ability to perform the behavior. While someone may have control over performing a given behavior, if he or she does not perceive that he or she has control, the individual is not likely to pursue the behavior. For example, if someone does not believe he or she has control over how much he or she weighs the individual is not likely to undertake a weight loss program. The Theory of Planned Behavior states that intentions along with perceived control can be used to directly predict actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

For accurate predictions of behavior using intentions and perceived control several conditions must be met. First, measures of intention and control must correspond with the behavior that is being predicted and must be specific. For example if the predicted behavior is to visit a specific destination again the intention should be to visit city A again instead of travel again. Second, intentions and control must remain stable during the time period between the assessment and performance of the behavior (employment, income, leisure time, place of residence, etc.) Third, perceived control must be accurate and reflect the actual behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985, 1988, 1991). In any given situation only one of the two predictors, intentions or perceived control, may be necessary to measure. As long as an individual has control over performing a behavior, intentions alone are sufficient to predict a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In a tourism
situation for which an individual has maintained the means to travel and control over the travel decision, a measurement of intentions alone would be sufficient to predict future travel behaviors.

Studies on travel intentions have been the focus of tourism research for years (Lam & Hsu, 2006). It has been shown that intentions accurately predict leisure behavior and that the Theory of Planned Behavior is appropriate to be applied to a sport tourism setting (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2009a). The performance of such behaviors as skiing, swimming, tennis, mountain climbing, or golf could serve and meet the criteria for future behaviors to be predicted as long as the appropriate conditions are in place (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Several studies have demonstrated the utility of the TPB in examining the variables used to predict intentions and, in turn, predicting behavior (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks, 2007; Tsai, 2010).

Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) applied the TPB to active sport tourists’ revisit intentions using satisfaction as a predictive variable and found TPB to be appropriate. Lam and Hsu (2006) found that the TPB fit the data well in studying the variables related to travel intentions of tourists to Hong Kong. Quintal et al. (2010) utilized the theory of planned behavior to analyze intentions of tourists to Australia and found that the theory was appropriate for use. Cheng et al. (2006) employed the TPB to examine tourist word of mouth intentions and found the theory to be correctly applied. Tsai (2010) used the TPB to analyze the factors related to travel behavioral intentions of tourists to Taiwan. Sparks (2007) applied the TPB to examine the variables that predict behavioral intentions of Australian tourists and found the theory to have utility. Huang and Hsu (2009) found
the TPB to be a good fit while investigating how the variables of motivation and satisfaction influence tourist revisits intentions.

Examples abound of studies that have been conducted that have used intentions to predict future tourist behavior in an effort to help understand consumers and in turn develop appropriate marketing strategies for attracting and retaining visitors. Many of these studies have used similar variables to the ones being used in the current study (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessy, et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Lee, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Petrick, 2002, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Whether explicitly stated or not these studies all utilize the concepts of the Theory of Planned Behavior. They are operating under the assumption that intentions are indistinguishable from the actual behavior and that individuals are more likely to execute their intentions rather than neglect them. Without this theoretical connection, any study of behavioral intentions bears no merit.

Petrick (2002) examined the effects of experience, value, and satisfaction on revisit intentions of golf travelers. Lee et al. (2011) used service quality and satisfaction to examine behavioral intentions in the golf tourism industry. Hennessy et al. (2007) studied the effects of quality, value, and satisfaction on golf tourists’ loyalty to a destination. Kouthouris and Alexandris (2005) used service quality and satisfaction to predict loyalty of outdoor sport tourists using word-of-mouth and revisit intentions. Hutchinson, et al. (2009) studied the variables of quality, value, equity, and satisfaction and how they predicted the revisit intentions of golf travelers in the Gulf South region of the United States. In a study of golf tourists that had booked a golf vacation package at a

Loyalty

There has been a call in the tourism literature for the shift to visitor loyalty as a strategic business goal. The move to measure loyalty is based on a need to better understand customer retention, which has a direct effect on an organization’s financial success (Chi & Qu, 2008). With a market that is becoming more competitive, it is becoming essential for tourism managers to examine the variables related to attracting
and retaining customers (Petrick et al., 2001). By understanding the determinants of loyalty it will assist managers in reaping the benefits of retention. Theory suggests that increasing retention and lowering defection is a major way to contribute to an agency’s ability to realize a profit (Cronin et al., 2000; Kotlar & Armstrong, 1996). Zeithaml et al. (1996) identified four distinct benefits of retention for an organization: 1) reduced marketing and administrative costs, 2) the ability to maintain margins without reducing pricing, 3) increased purchases one time, and 4) reduced costs to attract new customers.

Because of the increased costs associated with attracting new visitors compared with that of retaining existing ones, visitor loyalty represents the best opportunity for destinations to decrease their operating costs (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995). By understanding the antecedents of loyalty and its driving factors, tourism managers can be better equipped to change their resources and focus their marketing efforts to maximize the potential for financial success (Petrick, 2004).

Loyalty has been viewed as a two-dimensional construct made up of behavioral and attitudinal concepts. The behavioral concept involves the actual repurchase or revisititation while the attitudinal concept involves a positive attitude about the destination, intention to repurchase, and the willingness to give positive word-of-mouth recommendations. It has been suggested that using both dimensions increases the ability of an organization to identify those visitors who are truly loyal (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Oppermann, 2000). However, loyalty research has typically involved using primarily the attitudinal construct by measuring future intentions of consumers with the purpose of predicting future behavior and consumption. (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002;

Travel destinations can be considered products that consumers can either choose to repurchase or recommend to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). According to Zeithaml et al. (1996), there are five possible favorable intentions that can result from a consumer’s experience. These intentions include saying positive things about the organization, recommending the experience to others, repurchasing the experience from the organization, spending additional money with the organization, and paying a premium price to experience it again.

The most common loyalty outcomes that have been used to measure the degree of a tourist’s loyalty to a destination have been intentions to revisit and willingness to recommend it to others (Bigne et al. 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessey et al., 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Recommendations from previous tourists are often considered the most reliable and sought after source of travel information by potential tourists (Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000, Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Hennesey et al. (2008) found that almost half of visitors rely on word-of-mouth communication for travel information. Word-of-mouth information is used by travelers to decrease the risk of destination choice (Hennesey et al., 2008). Information such as
brochures is useful, but it is not enough to persuade the final purchase decision. Positive word of mouth communication helps finalize the travel decision (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

Motivation

For years researchers have studied why people behave the way they do and why they make the choices that they make (Beard & Ragheb, 1983). It has been argued that motivation is one of the most important determinants of travel decision making (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Motivations of sport tourists have become a popular topic of discussion in the realm of sport tourism (Funk & Bruun, 2007; Funk, Toohey, & Bruun, 2007; Gammon & Robinson, 2003; Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005; Robinson & Gammon, 2004). Within the tourism literature there has been much written about tourists’ reasons for traveling (Breidenhann & Wickens, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Devesa et al., 2010; Kozak, 2002; Park & Yoon, 2009; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zhang & Lam, 1999). Researchers and marketers alike are interested in studying why people choose to travel and, more specifically, why people choose a specific destination. While motivation is only one of many variables that contribute to a tourist’s behavior, it is a critical variable because motivation has been seen by many as the driving force behind all human behavior (Crompton, 1979). It is important for travel destinations to understand the profile of its visitors and implement appropriate market segmentation strategies based on this information (Kozak, 2002). In order to capitalize on the benefits of sport tourism it is important for managers to understand what motivates sport tourists to travel (Funk & Bruun, 2007). Understanding the differing motives of sport participants will allow
destinations to effectively design and market sport travel experiences (Green & Chalip, 1998).

Uysal and Hagan (1993) described a motive as “internal forces and external goals and incentives that guide, direct, and integrate a person’s behavior for future potential satisfaction” (p. 798). Motivation has also been referred to as psychological or biological needs and wants that arouse and direct a person’s behavior and activity (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Kurtzman & Zauchar, 2005; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Crompton (1979) pointed out that the stable equilibrium theory is most often utilized in the motivation literature. The theory states that disequilibrium is created when some need arises within an individual. The disequilibrium drives that person to take action to satisfy that need. The action stops when the need is met and equilibrium is restored. For tourists, the goal is to restore equilibrium through the travel experience. When individuals travel they are attempting to satisfy a set of psychological or physiological needs. When all else is equal, travel choice will be given to the destination that is most likely to fulfill the dominant motivational need.

Many people assume that when someone chooses to travel or take a vacation it is simply to take a break from their normal routine. Such a simple explanation fails to take into account all of the cultural, sociological, and psychological reasons why an individual might choose to travel. A single motive is rarely the sole reason for travel. There are generally several motives working within an individual, but one may take precedence. Most people’s travel decisions are a composite of several motivational factors (Robinson & Gammon, 2004). Iso-Ahola (1980) uses an iceberg to demonstrate the multitude of travel motives that exist. The tip represents the expressed motive, while the majority
remains unseen. It is the unseen part of the iceberg that relates to a person’s internal desires and needs to be fulfilled.

One of the earliest investigations into tourism motivation was done by Crompton (1979). Crompton’s initial study found nine common reasons for tourists choosing to travel. These tourist motivations included escape, exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of family relationships, social interaction, novelty, and education. Escape referred to a tourist’s desire for a temporary change of environment, to experience a change in the routine of everyday life. Exploration related to an opportunity for tourists to re-evaluate and discover more about themselves. Relaxation was connected more to a mental state of relaxation than a physical state and was seen as time to get away from stress and get refreshed. Prestige was the desire for tourists to do something special that may be admired by others. Regression referred to the travelers’ desire to experience things that were not possible in their normal routine. This is done in the form of attempting to experience something reminiscent of a previous era of their life through the travel experience. Enhancement of family relationships meant an opportunity to bring family members closer together and spend time with those closest to them. Tourists with a social interaction motivation were looking for a way to meet new people. The novelty motive referred to the tourists’ desire to experience something new or different from anything they had experienced in the past. Finally, the education motive related to travelers wanting to use the tourism experience as a means to develop as a well-rounded individual and enhance their learning.

Dann (1981) was also a pioneer in the study of travel motivation and identified seven motivations for travel. The first is travel as a response to what is lacking yet
desired, meaning that the current conditions do not meet the needs of the individual and they are attempting to meet those needs through traveling to a different location. This is essentially the founding thought behind all tourism motivation. The second travel motive was the destination pull in response to motivational push, suggesting that there are certain destination attributes that attract individuals or groups based on the needs they are attempting to meet. The third motive for travel identified by Dann (1981) was the fantasy motive, meaning that the travel may allow the tourist to behave or experience things that may be considered socially unacceptable or taboo in their current location. The fourth motive discussed was motivation as classified purpose. The purpose could be classified as general, specific, or rationalized. The general purpose of travel might be pleasure, but the specified purpose might be to escape a stressful environment, while the rationalized purpose would be the need to experience a different culture. The fifth motivation concept is motivational typologies, which discusses the idea of travel types, such as vacationer, business traveler, or excursionist. This also is related to the sixth motive of tourist experiences which focuses more on the individual experience of the traveler rather than just his or her role. The final travel motive identified was auto-definition and meaning. This motive describes how understanding how the travelers define a situation, one can develop a better understanding of tourism behavior.

Uysal and Hagan (1993) described four basic categories of motivation for people choosing to travel. These categories included physical, cultural, interpersonal, and status. The physical motive refers to visitors being able to rest, participate in recreation, sports, and fitness activities. The cultural motive relates to the desire to learn more about different cultures, environments, and societies. The interpersonal motive refers to the
desire to strengthen relationships, meet new people, and visit family and friends. Finally, the status motive is the desire to build self-esteem and feel as if one is doing something privileged.

There have been other similar motivation factors found throughout the tourism and sport tourism literature. Krippendorf (1987) identified eight reasons for individuals to travel, which included recuperation (similar to relaxation), regeneration, social integration, escape, freedom, self-realization, happiness, and broadening the mind. Zhang and Lam (1999) noted tourist motivations of knowledge, prestige, enhancement of relationships, relaxation, and novelty. Bouchet, Lebron, and Auvergne (2004) identified five tourism motivation factors that included physical experiences, autonomy, self-actualization, ecological experiences, and social affiliation. In an examination of travel motivation of visitors to community festivals Lee et al. (2004) discussed six motivational, which included cultural exploration, family, novelty, escape, event attractions, and socialization. Crompton and McKay (1997) also studied the motivations of festival tourists and found six significant factors they identified as cultural exploration, novelty, regression, recovering equilibrium (rest & relaxation), socialization, and family. In a study of international tourists, Kozak (2002) found four types of tourist motivations: culture, pleasure seeking, relaxation, and physical. In the Kozak (2002) study the relaxation and pleasure motives were found to be the most significant reasons for taking a vacation.

Motivations of consumers in the sport industry have become a common area of study due to the ramifications that it can have on marketing strategies. Much of this research has revolved around the motivations of sport spectators and event-based sport
One of the earliest researchers to examine sport consumption motivations was Wann (1995) using the Sport Fan Motivation Scale. This scale was used primarily to examine the motivations of sport spectators. Using the Sport Fan Motivation Scale, Wann (1995) identified eight factors of sport consumer motivation. These included eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family. Trail and James (2001) also examined sport consumer motivation with the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption, also using primarily sport spectators. The Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption uses nine motivation factors that include achievement, knowledge, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, physical interaction, physical skill, and social.

Motivations have also become popular with sport tourism researchers as well. In a study of active sport tourists Funk et al. (2007) identified six significant factors of motivation that included escape, social interaction, prestige, relaxation, culture, and knowledge. Papadimitrou and Gibson (2008b) also examined the motives of active sport tourists in Greece and found factors of excitement/exhilaration, novelty, relaxation, nature, and getting away/escape. In a study of travelers to the World Cup, Kim and Chalip (2004) identified factors of escape, learning, and socialization. Smith and Stewart (2007) discussed four general types of sport tourist motivation: escape, entertainment, family and social interaction, and aesthetic pleasure. Daniels and Norman (2005) studied the travel motivations of equestrian sport tourists and found that the highest areas of motivation were entertainment, group affiliation, and family.

Researchers have also examined tourism motivations within the golf travel industry. Common motivation factors that have been found include leisure, status, and
competition (Petrick et al., 2001), as well as novelty and change from routine (Petrick, 2002). Others have included culture, entertainment, prestige, escape/relax, social interaction, and family (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). There has been research done in the area of rural tourist motivations as well. Park and Yoon (2009) found motivational factors of relaxation, socialization, learning, family, novelty, and excitement. Relaxation was found to have the largest impact. Devesa et al. (2010) noted travel motivations of nature, culture, and rest and relaxation most common. It was also found in the same study that a relationship existed between the type of motivation and level of satisfaction. Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) described tourist motivations of uniqueness, adventure, culture, peacefulness, and sport.

One of the most widely discussed concepts in the tourism literature relating to travel motivation is the theory of push and pull travel motivations (Crompton, 1979; Kim & Lee, 2002; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Kozak, 2002; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zhang & Lam, 1999). According to the theory, the motivation concept is divided into two categories: either internal (push) or external (pull) travel motives (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Zhang & Lam, 1999). According to the push and pull concept, people travel because they are either pushed into travel by internal psychological factors or pulled into travel by external forces created by the characteristics of the destination. Push factors tend be more related to the tourist’s personal desire, while pull factors tend to be linked to the attributes of the destination of choice (Crompton, 1979; Kim & Lee, 2002; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).
Knowledge of push and pull factors that attract visitors to a destination can help marketers meet the desired needs of the travelers (Zhang & Lam, 1999). Understanding the interaction of the push and pull factors can assist marketers in coupling push and pull factors with marketing strategies and targeting segments that are likely to result in high satisfaction levels and increased retention rate (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). For example, a destination that knows the majority of its visitors have a high escape and relaxation motivation could focus their marketing efforts on such attributes as being able to do nothing, getting away, a simple routine, and similar attributes. Promoting excitement and adventure would likely have little impact for such a destination.

Pull factors are generally viewed from a tourism supply side and are considered the force of attraction of a destination on an individual and include such attributes as natural attractions, cultural and educational opportunities, sport and recreation opportunities, events or festivals, entertainment, shopping, accessibility or location, weather and climate, cost, water and beaches, and scenery (Kim & Lee 2002; Kozak, 2002; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). However, push factors have been shown to play a larger role in tourists’ destination selection and destination loyalty than pull motivations (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zhang & Lam, 1999). It has been suggested that push factors may play a larger role in destination selection loyalty because they provide the means to restore equilibrium that individuals are seeking through the tourism experience (Crompton, 1979). These internal push motives include factors such as relaxation, escaping from pressures and everyday routine, socialization, increasing self-esteem, learning, being active, family time, excitement and adventure, prestige, and cultural exploration (Crompton, 1979; Kim & Lee, 2002; Kozak, 2002; Uysal & Hagan,
The numerous amounts of motives for participating in sport and tourism activities are well documented. It is unrealistic to think that it is possible to identify all of the potential motivational variables found in the sport tourism industry (Robinson & Gammon, 2004). However, the studies noted above indicate that a core set of travel motives do exist. Tourism motivations are generally thought to include the constructs of cultural exploration, escape, novelty, regression, socialization, relaxation, and family (Crompton, 1979; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Funk et al., 2007; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Lee, 2009; Petrick et al., 2001). Therefore, tourist typologies should be formed based on travel motivations to a destination in order create a better profile of potential visitors and suggest appropriate marketing strategies (Kim & Ritchie, 2010).

Failure to differentiate between basic motivational segments can result in missed opportunities to create interest in a destination (Crompton, 1979; Green & Chalip, 1998; Kozak, 2002; Sofield, 2003; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Market segments are crucial to identifying groups of visitors that have similar attitudes and perspectives. Segmenting visitors based on motivation allows tourism managers to identify strengths and opportunities and increases the likelihood of visitor satisfaction (Devesa et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2004). Lee (2009) found that the type of motivation significantly affected visitor satisfaction as well as the intention to re-visit. Therefore, understanding motivation can potentially create repeat business and generate additional revenue. According to Kim and Chalip, (2004) the challenge for marketing professionals is to identify means to capitalize on motives in order to increase interest.
Satisfaction

There has been a call in the tourism literature for more studies to understand the role of satisfaction in developing visitor loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008). The link between satisfaction and post-purchase behavior has been well established. It has been found that high levels of satisfaction lead to repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hennessey et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002b; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Due to its impact on customers’ future behavior, an understanding of satisfaction must be the basis for evaluating destination products and services (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfaction is crucial for all types of destinations because of its impact on destination choice, consumption of products, and decision to return (Kozak, 2002). Satisfaction has been viewed as the overall pleasure or contentment felt by the visitor. It is the extent to which the travel experience fulfilled the traveler’s desires, expectations, and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Baker and Crompton (2000) referred to satisfaction as the positive emotional state of mind after the tourism experience.

The majority of research on satisfaction has been based on the model of disconfirmation of expectations (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin et al., 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Kozak, 2002; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Petrick et al., 2001; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml, 1988). The expectation-disconfirmation model was first developed by Oliver (1980) and is based on the fit between a consumer’s expectations and evaluated outcome. According to the model, consumers develop an expectation before the purchase then compare the actual results to the pre-purchase
expectations. If the performance is better than the expectations a positive disconfirmation occurs resulting in high levels of satisfaction. If the results of the purchase are lower than the expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs and low levels of satisfaction are the result. One problem with the disconfirmation model is that if expectations are decreased, satisfaction must increase. According to the model, this means that if someone has low expectations and receives a poor experience they will still be satisfied (Petrick, 2004). This type of satisfaction is obviously not the goal for destinations hoping to produce visitor loyalty.

When discussing satisfaction it is important to distinguish between overall satisfaction and traveler’s satisfaction with an individual attribute of the tourism experience (Chi & Qu, 2008). Satisfaction is sometimes related to the psychological state of mind the tourist brings to the destination and is often beyond the provider’s control (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Bigne et al. (2001) identified three types of satisfaction that tourists experience: response to an emotional or cognitive judgment, response to a specific focus of the trip, and response to a particular moment of the trip.

Past research shows that tourist satisfaction is an excellent predictor of repurchase intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Lee, 2009; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In order to retain customers, organizations must seek to satisfy them. If a tourism manager is able to identify how components of a destination’s product or service affect customers’ satisfaction, components of the experience may be altered to maximize satisfaction (Petrick et al., 2001). By improving the tourism experience through understanding the
components of satisfaction it is possible for tourism managers to increase visitor loyalty and, as a result, improve the financial success of the organization.

Service Quality

The tourism industry as a whole is a hospitality and service industry. This is fundamental to the destination-visitor relationship (Hritz & Ross, 2010). Service quality is one of the most widely studied and debated constructs across types of tourism (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Zeithaml, 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Zhang & Lam, 1999). It has been shown that service quality is one of the most important factors in attracting tourists to a destination and has been shown to be directly related to customer retention (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Lee et al., 2011; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Zhang & Lam, 1999). Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined service quality as a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of the organization and its services.

It is a major challenge in tourism to maintain superior service due to the fact that the tourist is consuming a combination of different services from the time they leave home (Shonk & Chellaurai, 2009). A positive service quality experience is likely to result in high satisfaction and favorable customer intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Lee et al., 2004; Petrick, 2004; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003; Zeithaml et al., 1996). In times of economic stress consumers often discontinue their consumption of many leisure, recreation, and tourism activities. As a result many
agencies are adopting a service management model as the primary strategy for competing in the marketplace (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995).

Service quality has been suggested as an important component of success for recreation, sport, and tourism organizations (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003), as well as rural areas focusing on tourism as a source for economic development (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006). Services in the sport tourism industry fall into two categories: spectator or participant services. Spectator services offer entertainment and social opportunities, while participant services offer sport experiences that result in some type of mental, physical, or social benefit (Lee et al., 2011). Offering quality and specialized services is a key component of customer satisfaction in the golf industry. Golf courses fall into the participant service category and are more involved in providing an experience than a tangible product. Golfers spend substantially more time and money for the golf experience than traditional retail services. In the golf industry when service quality assessments are high future behavioral intentions are favorable and vice versa (Lee et al., 2011).

High quality service means delivering services that consistently meet or exceed the visitors’ desires and expectations (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995). Much like Oliver’s (1980) disconfirmation model of satisfaction, Parasuraman et al. (1988) described service quality as the discrepancy between a consumer’s perceptions and expectations. It is the difference between what they feel the service should be and what they feel they received. Zeithaml et al. (1996) described two categories of service quality: desired service and adequate service. Desired service is the level of service that the customer hopes to receive combined with what the customer believes can and should be delivered. Adequate service
is the level of service that the customer will accept. It is the minimum service an organization can provide and still meet the customer’s needs. Exceeding the adequate service quality threshold increases the possibility of financial payoffs by increasing the possibility of customer loyalty.

Much of the service quality research in the tourism field stems from the marketing work done by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988). Parasuraman et al. (1985) first conceptualized service quality by identifying 10 dimensions of service quality. In a follow-up study it was then refined to five dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Parasuraman et al. (1988) is the most widely accepted and utilized scale in the service quality literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL instrument that includes five dimensions used to measure customers’ perceptions of an organization’s service quality. The five dimensions were tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The tangibles dimension refers to an organization’s physical facilities and the appearance of the staff. The reliability dimension is the organization’s ability to perform services dependably and accurately. The responsiveness dimension relates to the willingness of the staff to be helpful and provide prompt service. The assurance dimension refers to the knowledge and courtesy of the staff and their ability to convey trust and confidence to the customers. The caring dimension relates to individualized attention provided to the customers. Reliability has been found to be the most vital component of service quality for tourism and recreation organizations. However, gaps in the assurance and responsiveness dimensions have been
found to result in the lowest consumer loyalty (Backman & Veldkamp 1995; Petrick, 2004).

Much like the satisfaction expectation-disconfirmation model, when evaluating service quality visitors compare their perceptions of actual performance to their notion of desirable performance and the resulting discrepancy is their perceived service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1988) noted that customers use the same criteria to judge service quality regardless of service type and that the dimensions of SERVQUAL provided a framework that can be modified and adapted for specific needs. Crompton and McKay (1997) showed that the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are valid measures of service quality in the leisure and tourism field. SERVQUAL was designed to be applicable across a broad spectrum of service fields. It is most beneficial when used to help organizations better understand the service expectations and perceptions of consumers and to periodically track service trends. Results can then be used to improve service in needed areas (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

There is evidence in the literature that supports the use of perceptions-only measurement for evaluating service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The perceptions-only measure is appropriate when the primary purpose is to explain variance in a dependent variable. Measuring both perceptions and expectations may be more appropriate when the purpose is to diagnose service shortfalls (Parasuraman et al., 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

One of the most critical issues of service quality is understanding its impact on profit and other financial outcomes. Consumers and managers often have different
perspectives about the importance of service quality. Historically, managers have been reluctant to significantly invest in service improvements without evidence of financial benefits. Evaluating the impact of service quality through behavioral intentions and loyalty can help an organization measure the financial impact of service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It has been argued that from a tourism management perspective, service quality should be the most important aspect in the organization because, while it is only one factor in a visitor’s experience, it is the most accessible means available to management to achieve retention (Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Measuring service quality is likely to be more useful to management than other variables because it is the most under management’s control and is likely to offer the most guidance for making positive changes (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

While it is clear that service quality plays an important role in behavioral intentions and loyalty, the nature of the relationship is still somewhat unclear. There have been varying results on the impact of service quality on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Service quality has been found to be an antecedent of both satisfaction and loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Lee et al., 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002b; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). In a study of coastal resort tourists, Bigne et al. (2001) found that service quality had a positive influence on satisfaction and intent to return, but not necessarily the willingness to recommend to others. While examining tourists attending an annual festival, Baker and Crompton (2000) also found service quality to have a significant effect on both satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In a study of cruise ship passengers, Petrick (2004) found that service quality was a better predictor of behavioral intentions and loyalty than either
value or satisfaction, suggesting that if managers are only able to devote resources to one
variable to improve customer loyalty service quality is the preferred variable.

Service quality and satisfaction have both been shown to be good predictors of
consumers’ loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, 2004). It has also
been suggested that high levels of overall satisfaction lead to high perceptions of service
quality and vice versa (Parasuraman et al., 1994). There is a definite link between quality
of service, level of customer satisfaction, and the organization’s success (Baker &
Crompton, 2000). There is, however, some debate as to the nature of that relationship.

Service quality and satisfaction do share a common theoretical background and the
constructs do overlap. The dominant theory used in the conceptualization of both service
quality and satisfaction has been the expectancy-disconfirmation model first developed
by Oliver (1980).

There is much written in the literature that attempts to differentiate between the
two constructs. According to Bigne et al. (2001) both service quality and satisfaction
must be post-purchase judgments of the travel experience. However, service quality tends
to be more related to cognitive judgments and based on perceptions of excellence while
satisfaction is more related to affective judgments and refers to how the experience met a
visitor’s needs. Parasuraman et al. (1988) state that, although both satisfaction and
service quality are involved in a comparison of expectations, service quality is a global
judgment of the superiority of service, whereas satisfaction may be related to a specific
transaction. There will be times when the satisfaction with the experience has little to do
with the organization’s quality of service. A single negative transaction or incident may
have a negative impact on the overall satisfaction with the experience but may not affect
the overall impression of service quality (Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Petrick (2004) argues that service quality is conceptualized as a measure of the provider’s performance, while satisfaction is a measure of how the experience makes the tourist feel. Baker and Crompton (2000) had a similar perspective stating that satisfaction is an emotional state of mind created by a service experience, while service quality is an evaluation of that service which is more highly controlled by the tourism provider.

Value

Another commonly recognized determinant of loyalty is a consumer’s perceived value. Research has revealed that high levels of perceived value result in high levels of both repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick et al., 1999; Zeithaml, 1988). Some research indicates that value may even be a better predictor of loyalty than either satisfaction or service quality (Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1994; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002b).

A major difficulty in researching value is the variety of interpretations that consumers have as to what constitutes value. Zeithaml (1988) defined value as the benefits received for the price paid. Chen and Tsai (2007) described value as the overall appraisal of net worth of the trip based on what is received and what is given. Understanding what value means to the customer offers the potential to improve customer loyalty and the financial success of an organization. Zeithaml (1988) found that consumers defined value in one of four ways: 1) Value is a low price, 2) Value is finding what the consumer wants in a product, 3) Value is the amount of quality received for the price paid, 4) Value is what is received for what is given. Bojanic (1996) described
customers’ perceived value as one of three possibilities: 1) Offering comparable quality at a comparable price, 2) offering a superior quality at a premium price, or 3) offering an inferior quality at a discounted price.

Value has been said to be more of an individual judgment than satisfaction and involves benefits received for the price paid. Much like service quality, value is a cognitive response while satisfaction is an affective one (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, 2004; Zeithaml, 1988). There has been considerable research done in regards to the relationship between quality and value. According to Zeithaml (1988) value differs from quality in two ways. First, value is more individualistic and personal indicating that it is a higher level concept. Second, value involves trade-offs of give and receive components that are not present in quality.

There is somewhat of a consensus in the literature that all three variables of satisfaction, service quality, and value have an influence on consumer loyalty. However, there still exists a discrepancy as to which variable is most important for managers to measure and which has the most direct effect on loyalty. By better understanding how perceived value is formed and related to repurchase intentions managers will be better equipped to appropriately allocate marketing and organizational resources (Petrick & Backman, 2002b). Woodruff (1997) stated that “if consumer satisfaction is not backed up with an in-depth learning about customer value and related problems that may underlie their evaluations it may not provide enough of the consumer’s voice to guide managers where to respond” (p. 139).

Cronin et al. (2000) found that service quality and value were both significant predictors of satisfaction. Petrick et al. (2001) suggested that value may be an antecedent
to satisfaction and that the resulting satisfaction then leads to loyalty. Chen and Tsai (2007) found value to have a direct effect on satisfaction, and Cronin et al. (2000) found that value was largely defined by perceptions of quality and that consumers placed a greater importance on quality of service than they did with cost of the service. In a study done by Petrick (2004) examining cruise ship passengers, it was found that quality and perceived value lead to satisfaction, which in turn leads to loyalty, the study also noted that it is possible for satisfaction to be an antecedent of value and that value leads to loyalty. Hutchison, et al. (2009) studied 309 golf travelers and found value to be a significant predictor of satisfaction.

It is not debated in the literature that increasing visitor loyalty is vital for the success of tourism organizations. However, it has not been fully determined which variable has the largest contribution to increasing that loyalty. Motivation has been found to play a significant role in visitor satisfaction, which has, in turn been found to strongly influence loyalty. Service quality and value have also been shown to be significant predictors of loyalty and also play a role in overall satisfaction. It is clear that more research needs to be done involving visitor loyalty and how visitor motivation and the variables of satisfaction, service quality, and value contribute to increasing visitor loyalty.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants included in this study were individuals that purchased and completed a golf vacation package in a rural location. These individuals purchased their golf package through an entity that focuses primarily on organizing golf packages in rural locations. These packages included golf and lodging accommodations that ranged from two to four days. Participants purchased their golf vacation package from one of two organizations in the upper Midwest United States. These golf organizations were selected because of their popularity within the respective regions, their rural locations, and their access to an adequate sample size. All travelers who participated in one of the golf packages were not included in this study. Only individuals who had contacted these organizations and provided contact information in the form of an email address to the golf organizations were included in the study. These individuals served as the primary contact for their travel parties. Individuals had to be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study. An incentive was provided to the individuals who choose to participate in the form of a chance to obtain a discounted golf package on a future trip.

Instrumentation

This study used an electronic survey that is comprised of six sections: travel motivation, satisfaction with the golf vacation, perceived value of the golf vacation, service quality of the golf vacation, loyalty to the golf destination, and visitor demographics. The survey was constructed by the researcher using instruments that had proven to be reliable and valid.
The first section focused on the travelers’ motives for purchasing a golf vacation package. This scale was adapted from an instrument used by Funk et al. (2007). The motivation instrument contained 18 items under six factors. The travel motivation factors included social interaction, escape, prestige, relaxation, cultural experience, and knowledge exploration. The motivation scale utilized a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Funk et al. (2007) with a reliability coefficient of .82 to .85 and factor loadings of .66 to .91.

The second section measured the participants’ satisfaction with the golf travel experience. The satisfaction scale was adapted from Petrick and Backman (2002a, 2002b) and Hutchinson et al. (2009). The satisfaction scale contained four items intended to be a cumulative global measurement of overall satisfaction with the golf travel experience. All items used a seven-point Likert scale. The first satisfaction item is anchored from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. The second satisfaction item is anchored from very displeased to very pleased. The third satisfaction item is anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The fourth item is anchored from regretful to delightful. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Petrick and Backman (2002a, 2002b) with a reliability coefficient of .96 and by Hutchinson et al. (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .953 and factor loadings of .833 to .953.

The third part of the instrument measured the perceived value of the golf travel experience. This scale was adapted from an instrument used by Petrick and Backman (2002a). The value scale contained four items intended to be a cumulative global measurement of the participants’ perceived value of the golf travel experience. The scale
used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. This instrument has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Petrick and Backman (2002a) with a reliability coefficient of .93 and factor loadings of .84 to .93.

The fourth section measured perceived service quality experience during the golf travel package. Service quality was measured using five items from Hutchinson et al. (2009). The items are consistent with the five SERVQUAL dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The service quality instrument used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Hutchinson et al. (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .968 and factor loadings of .91 to .93.

The fifth section measured visitor loyalty toward the golf destination going forward. Loyalty was measured using two constructs: revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth intentions. The loyalty scale was adapted from an instrument used by Walker and Kent (2009), which was developed using the guidance of previous literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The scale contains seven items, four for revisit intentions and three for word of mouth intentions. The scale used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. This scale has been shown to reliable and valid as reported by Walker and Kent (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .83 to .93.

The final section of the survey contained questions about visitor demographics that include age, gender, ethnicity, income, profession, length of stay, size of travel party, zip code of home residence, and spending on lodging, food, and entertainment.
Procedures

The researcher contacted each of the golf organizations separately. A thorough explanation of the study, as well as the potential benefits was provided to organizations by the researcher. The three organizations agreed to participate by providing written permission. Using an electronic survey service, an online instrument was created and sent electronically to each of the participating golf organizations. The golf organizations then sent the survey via email to the individuals who had purchased a golf package. Along with the survey the participants received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, how to complete the survey, an assurance of confidentiality, and how to contact the researcher with any questions, as well as informing the individuals about the incentive to participate. Participation in the study was absolutely voluntary. Participants chose to participate in the study by simply accessing a link to the survey included in the email sent to them from the golf organization. The survey took approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. To maximize the response rate a modified Dillman (2000) was employed. A reminder email was sent one week after the original was sent, then again two weeks after the original email was sent. Data collection ended four weeks after the original message was sent to the participants. Individuals who did not wish to participate could simply ignore the message sent from the golf organization. This process was designed to be as minimally intrusive for the participants as possible.

All contact with the participants came only through the golf organization from which they originally purchased a golf package and provided the necessary contact information. At no time did the researcher directly contact the participants or have access to any of the participants’ contact information. At no time was any information that could
potentially identify the participants made available to the researcher. This was a measure agreed upon by the researcher and the golf organizations as a stipulation for participating in the study to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity, as well as a way for the golf organizations to protect the trust and privacy of their customers.

Data Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was used to measure the consistency of the measurement and structure of the model. Reliability and validity was measured using .70 as the threshold. Once factors had been accepted as appropriate for analysis the motivation factors of social interaction, escape, prestige, relaxation, cultural experience, and knowledge exploration were entered into a multiple regression as independent variables to explore the linear relationship and predictive power of satisfaction and revisit and word-of-mouth intentions. The factors of value and service quality were also entered into a multiple regression to explore the linear relationship and predictive power of satisfaction and revisit and word-of-mouth intentions. Satisfaction was also entered into a multiple regression to explore the linear relationship and predictive power of satisfaction and revisit and word-of-mouth intentions. In order to investigate which variables are best at predicting golf travelers’ satisfaction and revisit and word-of-mouth intentions a stepwise multiple regression was used. In this type of regression the variable that explains the most variance is entered first, followed by each successive variable accounting for the most variance not explained by the first variable and so on. This method was chosen because the intent of this study was to determine which variables are the best predictors of satisfaction and loyalty, not to develop the best overall prediction model (Petrick &
Backman, 2002c). Descriptive statistics were also used to help draw conclusions from the data.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER IV
MANUSCRIPT ONE: MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING SATISFACTION AND FUTURE INTENTIONS OF RURAL GOLF TOURISTS

Introduction

Economic development in rural areas has undergone a fundamental change over the past several years. The dependence on agriculture continues to decline in rural economies with many areas experiencing decreased population as a result of an outmigration of educated youth. As a result, tourism has emerged as an alternative economic revitalization strategy in many rural areas (Gannon, 1994; Greffe, 1994; Lane, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000; Luloff et al., 1994; Marcouiller, 1997). Tourism has often been seen as a driving force for regional economic development. Successful tourism marketing can lead to increased retail receipts, income levels, and employment rates (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

The growth of rural tourism often lies not in attracting a large number of visitors to an area, but rather in targeting an exclusive market that is searching for something unique or different. It is of the utmost importance for a rural destination to decide who their target visitors are and how best to attract them (Albacete-Saez, Fuentes-Fuentes, Llorens-Montes, 2006). Tourists to rural areas are often those who have become dissatisfied with the overcrowding and mass development of more traditional forms of tourism (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Greffe, 1994). A common quality that is sought out in rural tourism is the ability to provide peace and relaxation in rural surroundings. In almost every case, the rurality of a destination is central in the rural tourism travel experience (Long & Lane, 2000; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004).
It is important for rural areas to understand how tourism services and products offered in rural areas can increase the number of visitors and maximize the amount of local spending. When this is accomplished tourism can serve as an engine for development, income, and employment in rural regions (Greffe, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000). Rural tourism is a complex multi-faceted activity that is often viewed as agriculture-based travel, but it is also comprised of special interest travel for which a rural setting adds an element of quality to the experience. This can include such activities as ecotourism, climbing, riding, health, sport, and recreation (Lane, 1994).

One strategy rural areas have begun to implement to attract visitors to a region is focusing on individuals interested in participating in sport and recreation (Costa & Chalip, 2005). Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism market segments and is receiving increased attention for its social, environmental, and economic impact on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). A sport that appeals to tourists clearly has the potential to contribute to the economic development of a rural community or region. When a rural area’s local environment or conditions enable a popular sport as recreation, the opportunity to engage in that sport becomes an attractive attribute for promoting tourism (Costa & Chalip, 2005). It is no surprise that sport tourism is emerging as a prominent component of many rural economic development plans given its ability to draw visitors to a region (Green & Chalip, 1998; Long & Lane, 2000).

Within the sport tourism industry the golf travel market has emerged as an important component for destinations to investigate (Henessey, MacDonald, & MacEachern, 2008; Henessey, Yun, MacEachern, & MacDonald, 2007; Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Lee, Kim, & Ko, 2011; Petrick & Backman,
Golf tourism has been defined as travel or an overnight trip where golf is the primary motivation for travel and a major factor in choosing the destination (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Golf tourism can bring money into a community that benefits both golfing and non-golfing businesses. Golf travelers spend money in a variety of ways such as travel expenses, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment in addition to their golf related expenses. It has been shown that travelers who play golf spend more money visiting a region than those travelers who do not play golf (Hutchinson et al., 2009). Many rural areas are also beginning to realize the benefits of golf tourism, as it has been recognized that rural landscapes often provide unique golfing experiences and opportunities that golf travelers are seeking (Costa & Chalip, 2005; Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008a, 2008b). It has been suggested that golf’s ability to attract certain types of visitors may lead to higher returns for a tourism destination. The golf market represents a significant opportunity to grow and maintain visitation to a destination as well as generate substantial revenues (Hennessey et al., 2007).

The golf travel market is a dynamic and growing segment that can be extremely successful and popular when developed and marketed correctly (Hennessey et al., 2007). As the competition increases for attracting golf travelers to destinations, it has become more important for golf tourism promoters to identify variables that attract and retain clientele to their sites (Petrick & Backman, 2002b). As a result, golf tourism managers have recognized the need for effective marketing strategies. Market research is the key to understanding not only the needs and wants of the golf traveler, but also for remaining competitive in the marketplace (Lee et al., 2011). By better understanding the behaviors of golf travelers, destination marketers will be better equipped to develop more
appropriate marketing strategies and tailor their products and services to attract new visitors while building and maintaining repeat business (Hutchinson et al., 2009).

Understanding the variables that can increase customer satisfaction is crucial for financial success of sport tourism destinations. Increasing visitor satisfaction has been recognized as one way to increase retention among tourists (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This has also been shown to be true in sport tourism and among golf travelers (Hennessy et al., 2007; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Petrick & Backman, 2002b, 2002c).

In order to develop a better understanding of visitor satisfaction, it is in the best interest of golf marketers to understand visitor behavior to maximize profitability and competitiveness (Hennessy et al., 2007). One way to accomplish this is by examining the travel motives of visitors. Because motivation is such a dynamic concept, an understanding of visitors’ motivation is vital to designing and marketing the tourism experience (Kozak, 2002). The willingness of sport tourists to travel depends somewhat on what they hope to gain out of the experience. Understanding these expectations is essential to attracting sport tourists to a destination (Kim & Chalip, 2004; Snelgrove, Taks, Chalip, & Green; 2008), especially in rural regions (Devesa, Laguna, Palacios, 2010). By understanding what it is sport tourists are hoping to gain from the travel experience, tourism managers will be in a better position to develop marketing strategies that will attract visitors who are likely to be satisfied by the travel experience and in turn are more likely to remain loyal to the destination.
As more areas attempt to benefit from golf tourism it becomes critical to develop an understanding of what attracts and retains golf travelers (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Since the traveling golfer market has been shown to be increasing and substantial, it is believed that a better understanding of potential segments, such as travel motives, would be beneficial to golf destination managers (Petrick, 2002). This understanding can help golf tourism professionals develop more appropriate and effective marketing strategies.

It has been well established in the marketing literature that it is more efficient to retain an existing customer than it is to attract a new one (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). This is done by developing a loyal customer base. When a better understanding of what motivates travelers to visit a destination and what influences tourists to be loyal to a destination is developed, better marketing efforts and services can be designed to match tourists’ wants and needs. As a result, greater economic benefits can be gained (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin, Brady, Tomas, & Hult, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). This can be especially advantageous for those attempting to market golf and tourism in rural areas. Rural destinations often have limited resources for promoting tourism. Visitor spending in rural areas often represents a larger stimulus to the local economy as compared to urban areas where there are more sources of economic input (Greffie, 1994; Scott & Turco, 2007). While the benefits of rural tourism have been generally recognized, it is also quite clear that rural tourism efforts suffer from lack of evaluation and monitoring necessary to maximize the benefits available (Luloff et al., 1994).
Golf, as with all niche products, can play a significant role in positioning a destination in the marketplace (Hennessey et al., 2008). Despite a substantial amount of work on rural tourism and economic development, there is little that has been done to further the understanding of sport tourism in rural areas (Costa & Chalip, 2005). The purpose of this study is to better understand the travel motives of golf travelers in a rural setting and examine the role that motivation plays in a golf traveler’s satisfaction and loyalty in hopes of identifying potential market segments that are most likely to have a high level of satisfaction and customers who remain loyal to the destination.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Sport participants are often the consumers of sport tourism. Therefore, a theoretical framework that focuses on participants’ psychological decision-making process is needed to examine factors that influence sport tourists’ loyalty to a destination in the form of revisit and word-of-mouth intentions (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). The current study was framed around the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine which motivation factors are best at predicting satisfaction and loyalty in rural golf tourists. This theory has been successfully tested and deemed appropriate in a variety of tourism contexts (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010; Shonk & Cheladurai, 2009; Sparks, 2007a, 2007b; Tsai, 2010).

The TPB states that an individual’s behavior is best predicted by one’s intentions. According to the theory, planned behaviors are determined by behavioral intentions, which are largely influenced by an individual’s attitude toward a behavior. According to
Ajzen (1991) the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely actual performance of the behavior is to occur. Intention is viewed as an immediate antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). The TPB assumes that individuals are more likely to execute rather than neglect their intentions. Intentions are assumed to capture the strength of the motivational factors that influence a behavior and are considered indicators of how hard people are willing to work to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Studies on travel intentions have been the focus of tourism research for years (Lam & Hsu, 2006). It has been shown that intentions accurately predict leisure behavior and that the Theory of Planned Behavior is appropriate to be applied to a sport tourism setting (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Shonk & Cheladurai, 2009). The performance of such behaviors as skiing, swimming, tennis, mountain climbing, or golf could serve and meet the criteria for future behaviors to be predicted as long as the appropriate conditions are in place (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Several studies have demonstrated the utility of the TPB in examining the variables used to predict intentions and, in turn, predicting behavior (Cheng et al., 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks, 2007a, 2007b; Tsai, 2010).

Examples abound of studies that have been conducted using intentions to predict future tourist behavior in an effort to help understand consumers and, in turn, develop appropriate marketing strategies for attracting and retaining visitors. Many of these studies have used similar variables to the ones being used in the current study (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessy et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kouthoursis & Alexandris, 2005; Lee, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Petrick, 2002, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001;
Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002). Whether explicitly stated or not these studies all utilize the concepts of the Theory of Planned Behavior. They are operating under the assumption that intentions are an accurate predictor of actual behavior and that individuals are more likely to execute their intentions rather than neglect them. Without this theoretical connection, any study of behavioral intentions bears no merit.

Loyalty

There has been an emphasis placed on visitor loyalty in the literature as a strategic goal for tourism destinations. The emphasis on loyalty is based on the link between retention and an organization’s financial success (Chi & Qu, 2008). Theory suggests that increasing retention and lowering defection is a significant way to contribute to an agency’s ability to realize a profit (Cronin et al., 2000; Kotlar & Armstrong, 1996). Zeithaml et al. (1996) identifies four distinct benefits of retention for an organization: 1) reduced marketing and administrative costs, 2) the ability to maintain margins without reducing pricing, 3) increased purchases one time, and 4) reduced costs to attract new customers. By understanding the antecedents of loyalty, tourism managers can be better equipped to change their resources and focus their marketing efforts to maximize the potential for financial success (Petrick, 2004).

Loyalty has been viewed as a two-dimensional construct made up of behavioral and attitudinal concepts. The behavioral concept involves the actual repurchase or revisitation, while the attitudinal concept involves a positive attitude about the destination, intent to repurchase, and the willingness to give positive word-of-mouth recommendations to others. It has been suggested that using both dimensions increases the ability of an organization to identify those visitors who are truly loyal (Backman &
Veldkamp, 1995; Oppermann, 2000). However, loyalty research has typically involved using primarily the attitudinal construct by measuring future intentions of consumers with the purpose of predicting future behavior and consumption. (Bigne et al. 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The implication is that intentions and future behavior are theoretically indistinguishable (Ajzen, 1985, 1988, 1991; Ajzen & Driver, 1992).

The most common outcomes that have been used to measure the degree of a tourist’s loyalty to a destination have been intentions to revisit and willingness to recommend it to others (Bigne et al. 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessey et al., 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Recommendations from previous tourists are often considered the most reliable and sought after source of travel information by potential visitors (Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Hennesey et al. (2008) cited evidence that almost half of travelers rely on word-of-mouth communication for travel information and that it is used by travelers to decrease the risk of destination choice. Information such as brochures is useful, but it is not enough to persuade the final purchase decision. Positive word-of-mouth communication helps finalize the travel decision (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

**Satisfaction**

The link between satisfaction and post-purchase behavior has been well established in both the tourism and marketing literature. It has been found that high levels of satisfaction lead to repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth intentions (Baker &
Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hennessey et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Due to its impact on customers’ future behavior, an understanding of satisfaction must be the basis for evaluating a destination’s products and services (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfaction is crucial for all types of destinations because of its impact on destination choice, consumption of products, and decision to return (Kozak, 2002). Satisfaction has been viewed as the overall pleasure or contentment felt by the visitor. It is the extent to which the travel experience fulfilled the traveler’s desires, expectations, and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Baker and Crompton (2000) referred to satisfaction as the positive emotional state of mind after the tourism experience.

Past research shows that tourist satisfaction is an excellent predictor of repurchase intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Chi & Qu, 2008; Lee, 2009; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In order to retain customers, organizations must seek to satisfy them. If a tourism manager is able to identify how attributes of a destination affect customers’ satisfaction, components of the experience may be altered to maximize satisfaction (Petrick et al., 2001). By improving the tourism experience through understanding the components of satisfaction it is possible for tourism managers to increase visitor loyalty and, as a result, improve the financial success of the organization.

**Travel Motivation**

It has been argued that no study of satisfaction is complete without an examination of travel motivation (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Within the tourism literature
there has been much written about tourists’ reasons for traveling (Breidenhann & Wickens, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Devesa et al., 2010; Funk & Bruun, 2007; Funk, Toohey, & Bruun, 2007; Gammon & Robinson, 2003; Kozak, 2002; Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005; Park & Yoon, 2009; Robinson & Gammon, 2004; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zhang & Lam, 1999). Researchers and marketers alike are interested in studying why people choose to travel, and more specifically, why people choose a specific destination. While motivation is only one of many variables that contribute to a tourist’s behavior, it is a critical variable because motivation has been seen by many as the driving force behind all human behavior (Crompton, 1979).

Crompton (1979) pointed out that the stable equilibrium theory is most often utilized in the motivation literature. The theory states that disequilibrium is created when a need arises within an individual. The disequilibrium drives that person to take action to satisfy that need. The action stops when the need is met and equilibrium is restored. For tourists, the goal is to restore equilibrium through the travel experience. When individuals travel, they are attempting to satisfy a set of psychological or physiological needs. When all else is equal, travel choice will be given to the destination that is most likely to fulfill the dominant motivational need. Most people’s travel decisions are a composite of several motivational factors (Robinson & Gammon, 2004). Iso-Ahola (1980) uses an iceberg to demonstrate the multitude of travel motives that exist. The tip represents the expressed motive, while the majority remains unseen. It is the unseen portion that relates to a person’s internal needs and desires to be fulfilled.
One of the earliest investigations into tourism motivation was done by Crompton (1979). Crompton’s initial study found nine common reasons, or factors, for tourists choosing to travel. These tourist motivations included escape, exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of family relationships, social interaction, novelty, and education. Escape referred to a tourist’s desire for a temporary change of environment, to experience a change in the routine of everyday life. Exploration related to an opportunity for the tourist to reevaluate and discover more about themselves. Relaxation was connected more to a mental state of relaxation than a physical state and was seen as time to get away from stress and get refreshed. Prestige was the desire for tourists to do something special that may be admired by others. Regression referred to the travelers’ desire to experience things that were not possible in their normal routine. This is done in the form of attempting to experience something reminiscent of a previous era of their life through the travel experience. Enhancement of family relationships meant an opportunity to bring family members closer together and spend time with those closest to them. Tourists with a social interaction motivation were looking for a way to meet new people. The novelty motive referred to the tourists’ desire to experience something new or different from anything they had experienced in the past. Finally, the education motive related to travelers wanting to use the tourism experience as a means to develop as a well-rounded individual and enhance their learning.

There have been similar motivation factors found throughout the tourism literature. Krippendorf (1987) identified eight reasons for individuals to travel, which included recuperation (similar to relaxation), regeneration, social integration, escape, freedom, self-realization, happiness, and broadening the mind. Zhang and Lam (1999)
noted tourist motivations of knowledge, prestige, enhancement of relationships, relaxation, and novelty. Bouchet, Lebron, and Auvergne (2004) identified five tourism motivation factors that included physical experiences, autonomy, self-actualization, ecological experiences, and social affiliation. In an examination of travel motivation of visitors to community festivals Lee, Lee, and Wicks (2004) discussed six motivational factors, which included cultural exploration, family, novelty, escape, event attractions, and socialization. Crompton and McKay (1997) also studied the motivations of festival tourists and found six significant factors they identified as cultural exploration, novelty, regression, recovering equilibrium (rest and relaxation), socialization, and family. In a study of international tourists, Kozak (2002) found four types of tourist motivations: culture, pleasure seeking, relaxation, and physical experiences. In the Kozak (2002) study the relaxation and pleasure motives were found to be the most significant reasons for taking a vacation.

Travel motivation is also a popular topic with sport tourism researchers as well. In a study of active sport tourists Funk et al. (2007) identified six significant factors of motivation that included escape, social interaction, prestige, relaxation, culture, and knowledge. Papadimitrou and Gibson (2008a) also examined the motives of active sport tourists in Greece and found factors of excitement/exhilaration, novelty, relaxation, nature, and getting away/escape. In a study of travelers to the World Cup, Kim and Chalip (2004) identified factors of escape, learning, and socialization. Smith and Stewart (2007) discussed four general types of sport tourist motivation: escape, entertainment, family and social interaction, and aesthetic pleasure. Daniels and Norman (2005) studied
the travel motivations of equestrian sport tourists and found that the highest areas of motivation were entertainment, group affiliation, and family.

Although not as prevalent, there has been research done on the travel motivations of golf tourists. Common travel motive factors that have been found include leisure, status, and competition (Petrick et al., 2001), as well as novelty and change from routine (Petrick, 2002). Others have included culture, entertainment, prestige, escape/relax, social interaction, and family (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). There has also been research done in the area of rural tourist motivations as well. Park and Yoon (2009) found motivational factors of relaxation, socialization, learning, family, novelty, and excitement. Relaxation was found to have the largest impact. Devesa et al. (2010) noted travel motivations of nature, culture, and rest and relaxation most common. It was also found in the same study that a relationship existed between the type of motivation and level of satisfaction. Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) described tourist motivations of uniqueness, adventure, culture, peacefulness, and sport.

The numerous motives for participating in sport and tourism activities are well documented. It is unrealistic to think that it is possible to identify all of the potential motivational variables found in the sport tourism industry (Robinson & Gammon, 2004). However, the studies noted above indicate that a core set of travel motives do exist. Tourism motivations are generally thought to include the constructs of cultural exploration, escape, novelty, regression, socialization, relaxation, and family (Crompton, 1979; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Funk et al. 2007; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Lee, 2009; Petrick et al., 2001). Therefore, tourist typologies should be formed based on travel
motivations to a destination in order to create a better profile of potential visitors and suggest appropriate marketing strategies (Kim & Ritchie, 2010).

Failure to differentiate between basic motivational segments can result in missed opportunities to create interest in a destination (Crompton, 1979; Green & Chalip, 1998; Kozak, 2002; Sofield, 2003; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Market segments are crucial to identifying groups of visitors that have similar attitudes and perspectives. Segmenting visitors based on motivation allows tourism managers to identify strengths and opportunities and increases the likelihood of visitor satisfaction (Bang & Ross, 2009; Devesa et al., 2010; Kim & Trail, 2010; Lee et al., 2004). Lee (2009) found that the type of motivation significantly affected visitor satisfaction, as well as the intention to revisit. Therefore, understanding motivation can potentially create repeat business and generate additional tourism related revenue for rural areas. According to Kim and Chalip (2004), the challenge for marketing professionals is to identify means to capitalize on motives in order to increase interest.

More research is needed related to segmenting golf travelers based on travel motivation. There has, however, been segmentation of the golf tourism market in other areas such as attitude, golfing frequency, and gender (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Gibson & Pennington-Gray, 2005; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Petrick, 2002). Considering the breadth of golf products associated with golf travel, segmentation based on motivation appears to be needed and justified (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Travel motives can be used as a basis for market segmentation by providing insight about their customers that can help those destinations promote to appropriate target segments (Crompton, 1979). A destination’s ability to meet tourists’ motivational needs and desires can directly influence their
satisfaction with the tourism experience (Lee, 2009). Segmenting golf tourists using travel motivation could provide distinct profiles for golf tourists which could provide the information needed to create marketing strategies unique to rural golf tourists within the larger golf market (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Knowing why tourists choose to travel and the needs they are hoping to fulfill allows both researchers and practitioners to better understand and predict future tourism behavior.

Studies of travel motivation and behavior in sport tourism have primarily been devoted to mainstream sports and have focused primarily on the spectator role. Much less attention has been given to individual sports, such as golf, with the primary emphasis on participation rather than the spectator role (Daniels & Norman, 2005). This study will add to the literature by focusing on sport tourism motivation in rural areas, particularly participation sport tourism in the form of golf vacations.

Research Questions

Based on a review of literature the researcher sought to develop a better understanding of golf tourists’ travel motivation and loyalty by advancing the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* Do certain travel motives predict the likelihood of satisfaction with the travel experience in golf tourists to rural destinations?

*Research Question 2:* Do certain travel motives predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word-of-mouth recommendations in golf tourists to rural destinations?

*Research Question: 3:* Do certain travel motives predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of revisit intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?
Research Question 4: Does satisfaction with the travel experience predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word-of-mouth recommendations in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Research Question 5: Does satisfaction with the travel experience predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of revisit intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Methods

Participants

Participants included in this study were individuals who purchased and completed a golf vacation package in a rural location. These individuals purchased their golf package through an entity that focuses exclusively on organizing golf packages in rural locations. The golf vacation packages included golf and lodging accommodations and ranged from two to four days. Participants purchased their golf vacation package from one of two organizations in the upper Midwest United States. These golf organizations were selected because of their popularity within the respective regions, their rural locations, and their access to an adequate sample size. All travelers who participated in one of these golf packages were not included in this study. Only individuals who provided contact information in the form of an email address to the golf organizations were included in the study. The participants generally served as the primary contact for their travel parties. Individuals were required to be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study. An incentive to participate was provided to the individuals who chose to complete the survey in the form of a chance to obtain a discount on a future golf package.
Instrument

The instrument used for this study was comprised of four sections: travel motivation, satisfaction with the golf vacation, loyalty to the golf destination (future intentions), and visitor demographics. The instrument was constructed by the researcher using existing scales that have been shown to be reliable and valid (the constructs and scale items can be found in Table 2). Steps were taken to increase the content validity of the scales. First, an extensive literature review was conducted to find existing measures for the desired constructs that were valid and reliable. Second, the golf course managers and package administrators individually reviewed the questionnaire for clarity and suitability for context. The questionnaire was revised according to the feedback received.

The motivation scale was adapted from a scale used by Funk, Toohey, and Bruun (2007). Funk et al. (2007) used the scales to measure the travel motives of 239 international running participants on the Gold Coast of Australia. The motivation instrument contains 16 items under six factors. The travel motivation factors included social interaction, escape, prestige, relaxation, cultural experience, and knowledge exploration. The motivation scale utilized a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Funk et al. (2007) with a reliability coefficient of .82 to .85 and factor loadings of .66 to .91.

The satisfaction scale was adapted from Petrick and Backman (2002a, 2002b) and Hutchinson et al (2009). The scale was used to measure the satisfaction of golf tourists in the southern region of the United States in both studies. The satisfaction scale contains four items intended to be a cumulative global measurement of overall satisfaction with
the golf travel experience. All items used a seven-point Likert scale. The first satisfaction item was anchored from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. The second satisfaction item was anchored from very displeased to very pleased. The third satisfaction item was anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The fourth item was anchored from “regretful to delightful.” Respondents’ scores for overall satisfaction were determined by the mean response of all four items. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Petrick and Backman (2002a) with a reliability coefficient of .96 and by Hutchinson et al. (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .953 and factor loadings of .833 to .953.

Loyalty was measured using two constructs: revisit intentions and positive word-of-mouth intentions. The loyalty scale was adapted from an instrument used by Walker and Kent (2009), which was also developed using the guidance of previous literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The scale contained seven items, four items for revisit intentions and three items for word-of-mouth intentions. All of the loyalty items used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale has been shown to reliable and valid as reported by Walker and Kent (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .83 to .93.

The final section of the survey contained information about visitor demographics that included age, gender, ethnicity, income, length of stay, size of travel party, distance travelled, spending, and golfing frequency.

Procedures

To initiate the study, the researcher contacted each of the golf organizations separately. A thorough explanation of the study, as well as the potential benefits was
provided to organizations by the researcher. Two golf organizations, each specializing in rural golf travel packages, agreed to participate in the study. Each organization provided written permission to participate in the study. Using an online survey software program the instrument was sent electronically to each of the participating golf organizations for review and approval. The golf organizations then sent the instruments to the participants via email. A cover letter accompanied the instrument explaining the purpose of the study, how to complete the survey, an assurance of confidentiality, and how to contact the researcher with any questions. To maximize the response rate a modified Dillman (2000) was used. A reminder email was sent one week after the original message was sent, then again two weeks after the original message was sent. Data collection ended four weeks after participants received the original message.

All contact with the participants was strictly through the golf organization from which they originally purchased a golf package. At no time did the researcher directly contact the participants or have access to any of the participants’ contact information. No information that could potentially identify the participants was ever made available to the researcher. This was a measure agreed upon by the researcher and the golf organizations as a stipulation for participating in the study to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity.

Results

Out of 635 surveys that were distributed, 316 responses were received resulting in a response rate of 49.7%. 88 incomplete questionnaires were removed leaving 228 questionnaires to be included in the data analysis. Results indicated that 90.6% of the participants were male and 9.4% female. In terms of ethnicity 97.8% of the respondents
were Caucasian with the other ethnicities represented being Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American. The average age of the participants was 48.2 years old. The age category with the most participants was 50-59 years old which included 25.8% of the travelers, 23.5% were between 30-39, 22.5% were between 60-69, 15.8% were between 40-49, 9.6% were between 23-29, and 2.9% were over 70 years old. The respondents appear to be well-educated with 78.2% having attended at least a 4-year college with 28.6% having earned an advanced degree. The golfers appear to have above average incomes with 70.5% of the respondent indicating that they had an annual income of $80,000 or higher with 31.5% earning between $100,000-$150,000. The average length of the golf package was 3.2 days with 70.1% of the respondents spending exactly 3 days and 16.7% spending 4 days on the golf vacation. The average distance traveled to participate in the golf package was 381.6 miles with 67.7% travelling 300 miles or farther, highlighting the rural location of the golf packages. The average travel party included 6.37 individuals with 44.8% of the respondents being part of a 4 person travel party. As might be expected, 36.4% of the respondents completed the golf vacation in June, followed by 20.6% in July, and 18% in August. Only 38.5% of the respondents indicated that they were a member of a golf course or country club. However, 69.8% indicated that they played golf one or more times per week. An entire demographic profile can be found in Table 1.
Table 1

*Respondent Demographic Profile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 &amp; over</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>97.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
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<td>.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>.4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2-year College</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College</td>
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<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Graduate School</td>
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<td>Advanced Degree</td>
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<td><strong>Annual Income</strong></td>
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<td>≤ $20,000</td>
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<td>.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>$40,000-$59,999</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥$200,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Party</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>178</td>
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<td>Business Associates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Spending</td>
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<tr>
<td>$0</td>
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<td>.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$351-$400</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥$400</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golfing Frequency</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 2 times per year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 times per year</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 time per month</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 times per month</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 time per week</td>
<td>70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more times per week</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>38.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golf Membership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>61.5</td>
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</table>

Data Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the appropriateness of the motivation scales used in a golf tourism context for the current study. The measurement model included 16 items with six motivation factors (Table 3) adapted from Funk et al. (2007). Six fit indicators were examined to evaluate how well the measurement fit the data. Results of the CFA revealed that the Chi-Square test was significant (p<.001), indicating an unacceptable fit. However, Chi-square is very sensitive to sample size and is not recommended as an absolute measure of fit, as it can often lead
to the rejection of a well-fitting model. The ratio of Chi-square over degrees of freedom has been recommended as a better goodness of fit measure (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). A common ratio used as an indication for an acceptable model is 3:1 (Kline, 1998). The ratio for the current study is 2.2, indicating an acceptable model fit. Another measure commonly used to assess model fit is the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which provides a measure that adjusts for parsimony by assessing the discrepancy per degree of freedom. A RMSEA value of .08 or below indicates an acceptable model fit and values above .10 indicate a poor fit (Meyers, Gamst, & Gaurino, 2006). The RMSEA for the current study was .073, indicating an acceptable fit. Other commonly used fit indices also indicated an acceptable model fit (TLI= .933, IFI= .908, NFI= .914, CFI= .951). Values for fit indices greater than .90 indicate a good fit, while values greater than .95 indicate an excellent fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The fit indices of the model are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis Fit Indices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Chi-Square($\chi^2$)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>339.49</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.829</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.881</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>264.48</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.204</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two items were removed from the original motivation scale. The first item, “Mix with new people,” was originally included under the social interaction motivation factor. By removing the item from the scale it improved the scale reliability from .599 to .928.
The second item, “Go places my friends have not been,” was originally included under the prestige motivation factor. By removing the item, the scale reliability was improved from .687 to .766. Removing these two items also resulted in a better model fit. In Table 2, model 1 represents the fit indices with the above two mentioned items included, while model 2 represents the fit indices with the two items removed. Removing the items left the factors of social interaction and prestige with only two items each. Since the purpose of the CFA in this study was to verify the appropriateness of the model rather to engage in structural equation modeling, it was deemed acceptable to remove the items and continue with the analysis with only two items included under the above mentioned factors. Petrick and Backman (2002b) have shown that it is possible to obtain meaningful results in the golf tourism context when conducting a CFA using factors that contain only two items.

From a practical standpoint it was logical to remove these items because they may not have been appropriate when considering the current context. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were quite experienced golfers (Table 1). Most experienced golfers would realize that the nature of the golfing experience (played in foursomes mostly in isolation from other groups) may not lend itself to meeting and mixing with new individuals and, therefore, would not indicate that as being a primary source of motivation for purchasing the golf package. As a result, the social interaction item, “Mix with new people,” may not be appropriate in the golf tourism context because while golf travelers may want to socialize, it is likely that they are not highly motivated by socializing with individuals outside of their established travel party. This can be seen by examining the mean scores of the remaining two social interaction items (Table 3), in
contrast with the removed item ($M=3.32$). The prestige item “Go places my friends have not been,” may not be appropriate in the current context due to the fact that the majority of the respondents indicated that they were traveling with friends (Table 1). As a result, it would be logical that the respondents would not be highly motivated by traveling some place that their friends had not been. Rather, the opposite might be expected, that they are highly motivated by the opportunity to spend time and socialize with their friends.

To examine reliability of the scales used in this study Cronbach’s $\alpha$ coefficient was calculated. All scales were found to have reliability coefficients greater than .70 and deemed acceptable (Warner, 2008). The Cronbach $\alpha$ coefficients for the motivational factors ranged from .766 to .928 (Table 3). The reliability coefficient for the Satisfaction scale was .874, Repurchase Intentions was .781, and Word-of-Mouth Intentions was .914.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct (Items)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Memories</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share my experience once I get home</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy good weather</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relax</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be emotionally refreshed</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Experience</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet people from rural areas</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience the rural lifestyle</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit historical and cultural sites</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Exploration</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore new destinations</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct (Items)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Exploration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase my knowledge</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your satisfaction with your golf package?</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you pleased with your golf package?</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was content with my experience on my golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your experience while on your golf vacation package?</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurchase Intentions</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization in the near future.</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization in the next few years.</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase my next golf vacation package from this organization.</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization.</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth Intentions</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will speak favorably of this golf package to others.</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will encourage others to purchase a golf package from this organization.</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will encourage others to support this golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted for the purpose of determining which travel motives were the best predictors the golf tourists’ satisfaction, repurchase intentions, and word-of-mouth intentions. The motivation factors of social interaction, escape, prestige, relaxation, cultural experience, and knowledge exploration were entered into the regression as independent variables while satisfaction was entered as the dependent variable in the first regression, repurchase intentions was entered as the
dependent variable for the second regression and word-of-mouth intentions was entered as the dependent variable for the third regression. In a stepwise regression the variable that explains the most variance is entered first followed by each successive variable accounting for the most variance not explained by the first variable and so on. Only variables that make a significant contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable are allowed to be entered into the model. This method was chosen because the intent of this study is to determine which variables were the best predictors of satisfaction and future intentions, not to develop the best overall prediction model. Tolerance statistics were calculated to determine whether any multicollinearity issues existed. There was no evidence of multicollinearity amongst the predictor variables. All tolerance statistics were well above the .01 level (Meyers et al., 2006).

Three motivation factors were found to be significant predictors of the golf tourists’ satisfaction (Table 4). In the first regression the factors of relaxation, social interaction, and knowledge exploration accounted for approximately 13% of the variance in satisfaction ($R^2 = .13, F = 10.655, p < .001$). Relaxation was the strongest predictor of satisfaction ($\beta = .210, t = 2.914, p = .004$), followed by social interaction ($\beta = .154, t = 2.382, p = .018$), then knowledge exploration ($\beta = .162, t = 2.272, p = .024$).
### Table 4

*Regression Coefficients for Significant Predictor Variables of Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>2.914</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interaction</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>2.382</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Exploration</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>2.272</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second regression relaxation and prestige were found to be significant predictors of the golfers’ repurchase intentions (Table 5). Approximately 19% of the variance in repurchase intentions was attributed to the two variables ($R^2=.192$, $F= 25.029$, $p< .001$). Relaxation was the largest contributor ($\beta=.288$, $t= 3.996$, $p< .001$), followed by prestige ($\beta=.214$, $t= 2.978$, $p=.003$).

### Table 5

*Regression Coefficients for Significant Predictor Variables of Repurchase Intentions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>3.996</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>2.978</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the third regression indicated that the factors of relaxation and knowledge exploration were significant predictors of the golf tourists’ word-of-mouth intentions (Table 6). These two factors accounted for approximately 14% of the golfers’ word-of-mouth intentions ($R^2=.142$, $F= 17.510$, $p<.001$). Relaxation was the strongest...
predictor ($\beta = .278, t = 3.938, p < .001$), followed by knowledge exploration ($\beta = .162, t = 2.288, p = .023$).

Table 6

*Regression Coefficients for Significant Predictor Variables of Word-of-Mouth Intentions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>2.939</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Exploration</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>2.288</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No other travel motives made a significant contribution to the prediction of the golf tourists’ satisfaction repurchase intentions, or word-of-mouth intentions. Finally, satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of both repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions. Satisfaction accounted for approximately 18% of the variance in repurchase intentions ($\beta = .422, t = 6.841, R^2 = .178, p < .001$) and 35% of the variance in word-of-mouth intentions ($\beta = .597, t = 10.925, R^2 = .356, p < .001$).

Table 7

*Correlations Among Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Interaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.484</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.390</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Exploration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repurchase Intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-Mouth Intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

If the golf travel industry is to continue to develop in rural areas as a means of seeking economic benefits related to tourism, an understanding of what attracts and retains visitors to those regions will be essential for success. In particular, an examination of visitor travel motives provides rural destinations the opportunity to identify and attract visitors that are most likely to be satisfied with the rural golf experience, recommend it to others, and purchase the travel experience again in the future. This study was designed to measure golf travelers’ travel motives, satisfaction, and future intentions by focusing on motivation as a segmentation approach to better understand the golf travel market and develop effective marketing strategies. Results suggest that rural areas hoping to benefit from golf tourism should promote relaxation, as it appeared to be the most important factor in predicting visitor satisfaction and future intentions.

In regards to the research questions investigated, the motivation factors of relaxation, social interaction, and knowledge exploration uniquely explained golfers’ satisfaction with the travel experience. The relaxation factor was the best predictor of satisfaction followed by social interaction and knowledge. The relaxation and prestige factors uniquely explained visitors’ repurchase intentions, with relaxation again having the strongest influence. The factors of relaxation and knowledge exploration had a
significant impact on the prediction of the golfers’ word-of-mouth intentions, with relaxation, once again, making the largest contribution. Finally, satisfaction was found to significantly predict both repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions, accounting for more variance in word-of-mouth intentions than that of repurchase intentions.

These findings are consistent with previous literature in that an understanding of satisfaction is crucial for obtaining revisit intentions, as well as positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hennessy et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee, 2009; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It also supports previous literature that there are certain travel motives that are likely to have a significant impact on visitor satisfaction (Bang & Ross, 2009; Devesa et al., 2010; Kim & Trail, 2010; Lee, 2009). It appears that golfers interested in relaxation are the most likely to be satisfied by the rural golf experience and, in turn, will be likely to repurchase the experience and recommend it to others. This is consistent with existing literature on the qualities commonly sought from the rural tourism experience (Devesa et al., 2010; Long & Lane, 2000; Park & Yoon, 2009; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004). While literature exists regarding the behaviors of golf tourists, as well as tourists interested in visiting rural regions, this study provided the first insight into what travel motives that rural areas will best be able to satisfy with the rural golfing experience.

Golf is one of the fastest growing niche markets in the sport tourism field (Hennessey et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kim & Richie, 2010; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b). The current study illustrates the importance of understanding
motives related to sport tourism and that it is possible for rural destinations to increase interest in the destinations by meeting the motivation expectations of certain sport tourists, in this case, golf travelers. It is possible for rural areas to not only draw visitors to a region, but identify visitors who have travel motives that are likely to create repeat business, as well as new business opportunities through word-of-mouth recommendations.

Managerial Implications

Existing tourism literature highlights the importance of understanding travel motives as a means for increasing satisfaction and developing marketing strategies (Crompton, 1979; Lee, 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Kozak, 2002). Research findings of the current study provide managers in the golf travel industry with insight into the behaviors of golf tourists and meaningful implications for the development of market segmentation strategies. Based on the knowledge gained from this study managers can identify focal points that appeal to the potential visitors who are most likely to be satisfied and demonstrate positive future intentions.

Similar to what was recommended by Funk et al. (2007), combining the opportunity for a vacation with a sport tourism experience, in this case golf, that was relaxing had great appeal and should be considered in the agencies’ marketing efforts. Based on the findings of this study golf destinations in rural settings should highlight the relaxing atmosphere that a rural golf vacation can provide. This could be done by promoting the destination as a way to *get away and get refreshed* or *come relax and enjoy the rural landscape*. The relative isolation of rural destinations could prove to be a valuable asset with this market segment, as it could be used to promote these packages as
the perfect trip for relaxation. Golf packages in rural areas may also benefit from emphasizing the calm and serene landscape that a rural destination can often provide. The peace and quiet that many rural areas are able to provide could be marketed to meet the motives of golf travelers. The results of this study indicate that marketing efforts that attempt to attract visitors with high relaxation motives should lead to increased satisfaction, revisit intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations.

The current study demonstrates how knowledge of travel motives can work to attract visitors to a destination that are likely to be satisfied and increase customer retention. While it has been shown that there are multiple motives that exist for people to choose to travel, the relaxation motive may still be dominant when it comes to determining visitor satisfaction and future intentions in the golf vacation industry. Managers in the golf travel industry should use the information to capitalize on travel motives as a means to grow and maintain tourism business.

Limitations

As with any study, there are certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The current study was limited due to the fact that participants were only sampled from two locations in one state in the upper Midwest United States. It would be beneficial to seek a more representative sample from a broader range of locations. This could help if the results from the current study can be generalized to the larger rural golf tourism market as well as the broader rural tourism market. The study was also limited by not randomly selecting a rural destination that offered golf packages, as well as by analyzing golf visitors from one golfing season. Selecting multiple rural golf locations over multiple seasons would add to the validity of the study. Another limitation of the study was asking
respondents to recall prior experiences rather than measuring the experience in real time. Surveying participants on location as they finished the golf package could also add validity to the current study. The data collected for this study was neither experimental nor longitudinal and, therefore, causal relationships should be interpreted with caution. Further research is needed to determine if the results can be generalized to all golf travelers or all rural destinations.

*Future Research*

The current study was an initial attempt to investigate the relationship between motivation, satisfaction, and future intentions in the golf industry, particularly golf vacation packages in rural locations. Future research may look at the impact of the golf experience itself as a motive for purchasing the golf vacation. Funk et al. (2007) recommend using a strength of sport motivation variable, as well as a prior sport experience variable, to examine the role of motivation in sport tourism and its impact on satisfaction and future intentions. Future research should also examine golf travelers in different domestic and international regions in order to better generalize the results of this study. It may also be beneficial to identify influential travel motives based on certain demographic variables such as age, income, or gender.

This manuscript will be submitted to *Tourism Management* for publication.
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CHAPTER V
MANUSCRIPT TWO: THE IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY, VALUE,
AND SATISFACTION ON RURAL GOLF TRAVELERS’ FUTURE INTENTIONS

Introduction

Issues of population decline, economic change, and community regeneration are universal in most rural societies. Many rural areas have suffered from a decrease in population in recent decades, as many of the youngest and most educated residents are migrating to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. This has caused several rural areas’ social climates to erode and economic bases to deteriorate. As a result, many rural regions have become less desirable areas to live and work, as many small towns struggle to maintain their viability (Albacete-Saez, Fuentes-Fuentes, & Llorens-Montes 2006; Bramwell, 1994; Costa & Chalip, 2005; Lane, 1994). The decline in the contribution of agriculture to rural economies and the outmigration of youth has led to an increased interest in tourism for rural communities as opportunities for economic exploitation of local resources and job creation. For many communities tourism may be one of the few remaining opportunities to enhance the local economy (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Frederick, 1993; Greffe, 1994; Long & Lane, 2000; Luloff et al., 1994; MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003; Sharpley & Roberts, 2004; Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van Es, 2001).

Research has shown that rurality can be a unique selling point for many vacationers. Travelers often look for high quality, unspoiled scenery that offers peace, quiet, and personal attention, which rural tourism can provide (Lane, 1994). Tourism activities developed around rural areas enable those communities to enjoy economic
progress in response to outmigration and decline of the impact of agriculture. Rural
tourism can include activities and interests in farms, nature, health, education, adventure,
and sport (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Bramwell, 1994; MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003).
Bramwell (1994) identified four qualities that rural areas often possess that tourists find
attractive. These include relatively low densities of people and buildings, less social and
cultural heterogeneity, less economic diversity, and relative isolation from economic,
social, and political networks. Tourism has been seen as a clean, attractive source of
employment with the potential for economic spinoffs in many rural regions (Luloff et al,
1994).

The growth of rural tourism often lies not in attracting a large number of visitors
to an area, but rather in targeting an exclusive market that is searching for something
unique or different. It is of the utmost importance for a rural destination to decide who
their target visitors are and how best to attract those visitors. (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006).
Tourists to rural areas are often those who have become dissatisfied with the
overcrowding and mass development of more traditional forms of tourism (Albacete-Saez
et al., 2006; Greffe, 1994). A major requirement for rural tourism is the ability to provide
peace and relaxation in rural surroundings. In almost every case, the rurality of a
destination is central in the rural tourism travel experience (Long & Lane, 2000; Sharpley
& Roberts, 2004). Where natural resources are insufficient to attract tourists, a rural
region can focus on activities different from those offered in other areas (Park & Yoon,
2009).

One strategy that rural areas have begun to implement to attract visitors is
focusing on individuals interested in participating in sport and recreation (Costa &
Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism market segments and is receiving increased attention for its social, environmental, and economic impact on destinations (Hritz & Ross, 2010). A sport that appeals to tourists clearly has the potential to contribute to the economic development of a rural community or region. When a rural area’s local environment or conditions enable a popular sport as recreation, the opportunity to engage in that sport becomes an attractive attribute for promoting tourism (Costa & Chalip, 2005). It is no surprise that sport tourism is emerging as a prominent component of many rural economic development plans given its ability to draw visitors to a region (Green & Chalip, 1998; Long & Lane, 2000).

Within the sport tourism industry, the golf travel market has emerged as an important component for destinations to investigate (Henessey, MacDonald, & MacEachern, 2008; Henessey, Yun, MacEachern, & MacDonald, 2007; Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2010; Lee, Kim, & Ko, 2011; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Golf tourism has been defined as travel or an overnight trip where golf is the primary motive for travel and a major determining factor in choosing the destination (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Golf tourism can bring money into a community that benefits both golfing and non-golfing businesses. It has been shown that travelers who play golf spend more money visiting a region than those travelers that do not play golf (Hutchinson et al., 2009). Golf travelers spend money in a variety of ways, such as on travel expenses, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment in addition to their golf-related expenses. The number of yearly golf travelers is estimated at approximately 11.4 million with an annual economic impact of $76 billion (Kim & Ritchie, 2010).
Rural areas are also beginning to realize the benefits of golf tourism as it has been recognized that rural landscapes often provide unique golfing experiences and opportunities that golf travelers are seeking (Costa & Chalip, 2005; Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008a, 2008b). The golf travel market is a dynamic and growing segment that can be extremely successful and popular when developed and marketed correctly. It represents a significant opportunity to grow and maintain visitation to a destination as well as to generate substantial revenues (Hennessey et al., 2007).

As the competition for attracting golf travelers to destinations has increased, it has become important for golf tourism promoters to identify variables that attract and retain clientele to their sites (Petrick & Backman, 2002b). As a result, golf tourism managers have recognized the need for effective marketing strategies. Market research is the key to understanding not only the needs and wants of the golf traveler, but also for remaining competitive in the marketplace (Lee et al., 2011). By developing an understanding of the behaviors of golf travelers, destination marketers will be better equipped to develop appropriate marketing strategies and tailor their products and services to attract new visitors while building and maintaining repeat business (Hutchinson et al., 2009).

In the marketing literature, loyalty is the concept most discussed in terms of building and maintaining repeat business. This concept can also apply to tourism and destination marketing. By developing an understanding of what precedes visitor loyalty and retention, better marketing efforts and services can be designed to match tourists’ wants and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin, Brady, Tomas, & Hult, 2000; Oppermann, 2000; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). When this is done,
tourism managers can estimate post-purchase behaviors and use that information in their decision making to improve the financial efficiency of the organization by most appropriately allocating resources (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This can be especially important to rural regions attempting to market tourism, as budgets may be more limited than those in more traditional tourism destinations (Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010; Greffe, 1994).

Three variables have primarily been studied when it comes to understanding what influences customer loyalty and repurchase intentions: service quality, satisfaction, and value (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001; Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002; Zeithaml et al., 1996.) It is a widely held belief that improvement of satisfaction and service quality will result in retention of visitors that will lead to enhanced profitability. Several studies have examined the effect of value, satisfaction, and service quality on such loyalty variables as re-visit intentions and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. All three variables have been found to positively influence customer loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al. 2000; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Petrick, Backman, & Bixler, 1999; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1996). However, there are few studies of visitor loyalty when service quality, value, and satisfaction are all simultaneously present.

While the variables of service quality, satisfaction, and value have been studied extensively, there is still little consensus on the causal order of the constructs and the
contribution of each variable to consumer loyalty. Petrick (2004) identified three models within the literature that attempt to explain the relationship between satisfaction, service quality, value, and loyalty. The first is the satisfaction model where value and service quality lead to satisfaction, which in turn leads to customer loyalty. The second is the value model where satisfaction and service quality lead to value and value leads to loyalty. The final model is the service quality model, in which service quality influences loyalty through value and satisfaction. Each one of the three variables discussed has been shown to be a significant predictor of consumer loyalty throughout the literature (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al. 2000; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002c; Petrick et al., 1999; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1996). However, no single determinant or explanation has emerged. More research is needed to understand the relationship of these variables and how they lead to increased visitor retention.

As more areas attempt to benefit from golf tourism it becomes critical to develop an understanding of what attracts and retains golf travelers to a destination (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick & Backman, 2002a). Since the traveling golfer market has been shown to be increasing and substantial, it is believed that a better understanding of potential segments and responses to services would be beneficial to golf destination managers (Petrick, 2002). With the high costs associated with operating golf facilities it is in the best interest of golf marketers to understand visitor behavior in order to maximize profitability and competitiveness (Hennessy et al., 2007). Scott and Turco (2007) pointed out that areas that often benefit the most from sport tourism are small regional or rural settings where visitor spending represents a significant economic stimulus.
Most sport tourism studies have primarily been devoted to mainstream sports and have focused primarily on the spectator role. Much less attention has been given to individual sports, such as golf, with the primary emphasis on participation (Daniels & Norman, 2005). Despite a substantial amount of work on rural tourism and economic development, there is little that has been done to further the understanding of sport tourism in rural areas (Costa & Chalip, 2005). It is also apparent that rural tourism suffers from a lack of formal evaluation (Luloff et al., 1993). This study will add to the literature by focusing on sport tourism in rural areas, particularly participation sport tourism in the form of golf vacations.

Research on the golf travel market is an emerging segment of the tourism field. As rural regions continue to diversify their economic bases, golf tourism can provide a unique market for rural tourism developers to explore. By understanding what factors lead to greater satisfaction and retention, more effective marketing strategies can be developed that can help rural areas capitalize on the economic benefits of golf tourism. The purpose of this study is to better understand how service quality, value, and satisfaction influence rural golf travelers’ future intentions. Although a substantial amount of research has been done pertaining to service quality, value, satisfaction, and future intentions in the marketing field, these issues have not been as well researched in the sport services context, particularly the golf industry (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011).
Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Sport participants are often the consumers of sport tourism. Therefore, a theoretical framework that focuses on participants’ psychological decision-making process is needed to examine factors that influence sport tourists’ loyalty to a destination in the form of revisit and word-of-mouth intentions (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). The current study was framed around the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine which travel motives are best at predicting satisfaction and loyalty in rural golf tourists. This theory has been successfully tested and deemed appropriate in a variety of tourism contexts (Cheng, Lam, & Hsu, 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; March & Woodside, 2005; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010; Shonk & Cheladurai, 2009; Sparks, 2007; Tsai, 2010).

The TPB states that an individual’s behavior is best predicted by one’s intentions. According to the theory, planned behaviors are determined by behavioral intentions, which are largely influenced by an individual’s attitude toward a behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely actual performance of the behavior is to occur. Intention is viewed as an immediate antecedent of actual behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). The TPB assumes that individuals are more likely to execute rather than neglect their intentions. Intentions are assumed to capture the strength of the motives that influence a behavior and are considered indicators of how hard people are willing to work to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Studies on travel intentions have been the focus of tourism research for years (Lam & Hsu, 2006). It has been shown that intentions accurately predict leisure behavior.
and that the Theory of Planned Behavior is appropriate to be applied to a sport tourism setting (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2009). The performance of such behaviors as skiing, swimming, tennis, mountain climbing, or golf could serve and meet the criteria for future behaviors to be predicted as long as the appropriate conditions are in place (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Several studies have demonstrated the utility of the TPB in examining the variables used to predict intentions and, in turn, predicting behavior (Cheng et al., 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2010; Sparks, 2007a; Tsai, 2010).

Examples abound of studies that have been conducted using intentions to predict future tourist behavior in an effort to help understand consumers and, in turn, develop appropriate marketing strategies for attracting and retaining visitors. Many of these studies have used similar variables to the ones being used in the current study (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessy et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kouthoursis & Alexandris, 2005; Lee, 2009; Lee et al., 2010; Petrick, 2002, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Whether explicitly stated or not these studies all utilize the concepts of the Theory of Planned Behavior. They are operating under the assumption that intentions are an accurate predictor of actual behavior and that individuals are more likely to execute their intentions rather than neglect them. Without this theoretical connection, any study of behavioral intentions bears no merit.

Loyalty

There has been an emphasis placed on visitor loyalty in the literature as a strategic goal for tourism destinations. The emphasis on loyalty is based on the link between
retention and an organization’s financial success (Chi & Qu, 2008). Theory suggests that increasing retention and lowering defection is a major way to contribute to an agency’s ability to realize a profit (Cronin et al., 2000; Kotlar & Armstrong, 1996). Zeithaml (1996) identifies four distinct benefits of retention for an organization: 1) reduced marketing and administrative costs, 2) the ability to maintain margins without reducing pricing, 3) increased purchases one time, and 4) reduced costs to attract new customers. By understanding the antecedents of loyalty, tourism managers can be better equipped to change their resources and focus their marketing efforts to maximize the potential for financial success (Petrick, 2004).

Loyalty is commonly viewed as a two-dimensional construct made up of behavioral and attitudinal concepts. The behavioral concept involves the actual repurchase or revisitation. The attitudinal concept involves a positive attitude about the destination, intent to repurchase, and the willingness to give positive word-of-mouth recommendations. It has been suggested that using both dimensions increases the ability of an organization to identify those visitors who are truly loyal (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Oppermann, 2000). However, loyalty research has typically involved using only the attitudinal construct by measuring future intentions of consumers with the purpose of predicting future behavior and consumption (Bigne et al. 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The implication is that intentions and future behavior are theoretically indistinguishable (Ajzen, 1985, 1988, 1991; Ajzen & Driver, 1992).
The most common outcomes that have been used to measure the degree of a tourist’s loyalty to a destination have been intentions to revisit and willingness to recommend it to others (Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hennessey et al., 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Recommendations from previous tourists are often considered the most reliable and sought after source of travel information by potential tourists (Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Hennesey et al. (2008) found that almost half of visitors rely on word-of-mouth communication for travel information and to decrease the risk of destination choice. Information such as brochures is useful, but it is not enough to persuade the final purchase decision. Positive word-of-mouth communication helps finalize the travel decision (Fodness & Murray, 1999).

Satisfaction

Increasing visitor satisfaction has been found as an effective means to increase retention among tourists (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This has been shown to be true in sport tourism and among golf travelers (Hennessy et al., 2007; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Petrick & Backman, 2002b, 2002c). Therefore, understanding the variables that can increase customer satisfaction is crucial for financial success of sport tourism destinations. Variables that have been suggested to increase visitor satisfaction include service quality and value (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hennessy et al, 2007; Lee et al., 2004; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005). It has also been shown that offering quality services is a key
component of customer satisfaction and retention in the golf industry (Hennessy et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2011), as well as in rural tourism (Albacete-Saez, 2006).

The link between satisfaction and post-purchase behavior has been well established in the tourism literature. It has been found that high levels of satisfaction lead to repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hennessey et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Due to its impact on customers’ future behaviors, an understanding of satisfaction must be the basis for evaluating destination products and services (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfaction is crucial for all types of destinations because of its impact on destination choice, consumption of products, and decision to return (Kozak, 2002). Satisfaction has been viewed as the overall pleasure or contentment felt by the visitor. It is the extent to which the travel experience fulfilled the traveler’s desires, expectations, and needs (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Baker and Crompton (2000) referred to satisfaction as the positive emotional state of mind after the tourism experience.

Past research shows that tourist satisfaction is an excellent predictor of repurchase intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Lee, 2009; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In order to retain customers, organizations must seek to satisfy them. If a tourism manager is able to identify how components of a destination’s product or service affect customers’ satisfaction, components of the experience may be altered to maximize satisfaction (Petrick et al., 2001). By improving the tourism experience through understanding the
components of satisfaction it is possible for tourism managers to increase visitor loyalty and, as a result, improve the financial success of the organization.

Service Quality

The tourism industry as a whole is a hospitality and service industry. This is fundamental to the destination-visitor relationship (Hritz & Ross, 2010). Service quality is one of the most widely studied and debated constructs across the various types of tourism (Albacete-Saez et al., 2006; Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, 1988; Petrick, 2004; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Zhang & Lam, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1996). It is accepted that service quality is one of the most important factors in attracting tourists to a destination and has been shown to be directly related to customer retention (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Lee et al., 2011; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Zhang & Lam, 1999). Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1988) defined service quality as a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of the organization and its services. A positive service quality experience is likely to result in high satisfaction and favorable customer intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Lee et al., 2004; Petrick, 2004; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Service quality has been suggested as an important component of success for recreation, sport, and tourism organizations (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001, Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003), as well as for rural areas focusing on tourism as a source for economic development (Albacete-Saez et al.,...
Services in the sport tourism industry fall into two categories: spectator or participant services. Spectator services offer entertainment and social opportunities, while participant services offer sport experiences that result in some type of mental, physical, or social benefit (Lee et al., 2011). Offering quality and specialized services is a key component of customer satisfaction in the golf industry. Golf courses fall into the participant service category and are more involved in providing an experience than a tangible product. Golfers spend substantially more time and money for the golf experience than traditional retail services. In the golf industry, when service quality assessments are high, future behavioral intentions are favorable and vice versa (Lee et al., 2011).

Much of the service quality research in the tourism field stems from the marketing work done by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988). Parasuraman et al. (1988) is the most widely accepted and utilized scale in the service quality literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Theodrakis & Alexandris, 2008). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL instrument that includes five dimensions used to measure customers’ perceptions of an organization’s service quality. The five dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The tangibles dimension refers to an organization’s physical facilities and the appearance of the staff. The reliability dimension is the organization’s ability to perform services dependably and accurately. The responsiveness dimension relates to the willingness of the staff to be helpful and provide prompt service. The assurance dimension refers to the knowledge and courtesy of the staff and their ability to convey trust and confidence to the customers. The caring dimension relates to individualized attention provided to the customers.
Reliability has been found to be the most vital component of service quality for tourism and recreation organizations. However, low ratings in the assurance and responsiveness dimensions have been found to result in the lowest consumer loyalty (Backman & Veldkamp 1995; Petrick, 2004).

Crompton and McKay (1997) showed that the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are valid measures of service quality in the leisure and tourism field. SERVQUAL was designed to be applicable across a broad spectrum of service fields. It is most beneficial when used to help organizations better understand the service expectations and perceptions of consumers and to periodically track service trends. Results can then be used to improve service in needed areas (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

One of the most critical issues of service quality is understanding its impact on profit and other financial outcomes. Evaluating the impact of service quality through behavioral intentions and loyalty can help an organization measure the financial impact of service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It has been argued that from a tourism management perspective, service quality is the most important focus of any organization. While it is only one factor in a visitor’s experience, it is the most accessible means available to management to achieve retention (Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Measuring service quality is likely to be more useful to management than other variables because it is the most under management’s control and is likely to offer the most guidance for making positive changes (Baker & Crompton, 2000).

While it is clear that service quality plays an important role in behavioral intentions and loyalty, the nature of the relationship is still somewhat unclear. There have been varying results regarding the impact of service quality on satisfaction and behavioral
intentions. Service quality has been found to be an antecedent of both satisfaction and loyalty (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Lee et al., 2004; Petrick & Backman 2002b; Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003). In a study of coastal resort tourists, Bigne et al. (2001) found that service quality had a positive influence on satisfaction and intent to return, but not necessarily the willingness to recommend to others. While examining tourists attending an annual festival, Baker and Crompton (2000) also found service quality to have a significant effect on both satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In a study of cruise ship passengers, Petrick (2004) found that service quality was a better predictor of behavioral intentions and loyalty than either value or satisfaction, suggesting that if managers are only able to devote resources to one variable to improve customer loyalty, service quality is the preferred variable.

Service quality and satisfaction have both been proven to be good predictors of consumers’ loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, 2004). It has also been suggested that high levels of overall satisfaction lead to high perceptions of service quality and vice versa (Parasuraman et al., 1994). There is a definite link between quality of service, level of customer satisfaction, and the organization’s success (Baker & Crompton, 2000). There is, however, still some debate as to the nature of that relationship.

There is much written in the literature that attempts to differentiate between the constructs of satisfaction and service quality. According to Bigne et al. (2001) both service quality and satisfaction must be post-purchase judgments of the travel experience. However, service quality tends to be more related to cognitive judgments and based on perceptions of excellence while satisfaction is more related to affective judgments and
refers to how the experience met a visitor’s needs. Parasuraman et al. (1988) state that although both satisfaction and service quality are involved in a comparison of expectations, service quality is a global judgment of the superiority of service where as satisfaction may be related to a specific transaction. There will be times when the satisfaction with the experience has little to do with the organization’s quality of service. A single negative transaction or incident may have a negative impact on the overall satisfaction with the experience but may not affect the overall impression of service quality (Tian-Cole et al., 2002). Petrick (2004) argues that service quality is conceptualized as a measure of the provider’s performance while satisfaction is a measure of how the experience makes the tourist feel. Baker and Crompton (2000) had a similar perspective stating that satisfaction is an emotional state of mind created by a service experience while service quality is an evaluation of that service, which is more highly controlled by the tourism provider.

Value

Research has revealed that high levels of perceived value result in high levels of both re-purchase and word-of-mouth intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick et al., 1999; Zeithaml, 1988). Some research indicates that value may even be a better predictor of loyalty than either satisfaction or service quality (Cronin et al., 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002b).

A major difficulty in researching value is the variety of interpretations that consumers have as to what constitutes value. Understanding what value means to the customer offers the potential to improve customer loyalty and the financial success of an
organization. Zeithaml (1988) defined value as the benefits received for the price paid. Chen and Tsai (2007) described value as the overall appraisal of net worth of the trip based on what is received and what is given. Zeithaml (1988) found that consumers defined value in one of four ways: 1) Value is a low price, 2) Value is finding what the consumer wants in a product, 3) Value is the amount of quality received for the price paid, 4) Value is what is received for what is given. Bojanic (1996) described customers’ perceived value as one of three possibilities: 1) Offering comparable quality at a comparable price, 2) offering a superior quality at a premium price, or 3) offering an inferior quality at a discounted price.

There has been considerable research done in regards to the relationship between service quality and value. According to Zeithaml (1988) value differs from service quality in two ways. First, value is more individualistic and personal indicating that it is a higher level concept. Second, value involves trade-offs of give and receive components that are not present in quality. There is somewhat of a consensus in the literature that all three variables of satisfaction, service quality, and value have an influence on consumer loyalty. However, there still exists a discrepancy as to which variable is most important for managers to measure and which has the most direct effect on loyalty. By better understanding how perceived value is related to tourist loyalty, managers will be better equipped to appropriately allocate marketing and organizational resources (Petrick & Backman, 2002b).

Cronin et al. (2000) found that service quality and value were both significant predictors of satisfaction. Petrick et al. (2001) suggested that value may be an antecedent to satisfaction and that the resulting satisfaction then leads to loyalty. Chen and Tsai
(2007) found value to have a direct effect on satisfaction and Cronin et al. (2000) found that value was largely defined by perceptions of quality and that consumers placed a greater importance on quality of service than they did with cost of the service. In a study done by Petrick (2004) examining cruise ship passengers, it was found that quality and perceived value lead to satisfaction, which in turn, lead to loyalty, but also noted that it is possible for satisfaction to be an antecedent of value and that value leads to loyalty. Hutchison et al. (2009) studied 309 golf travelers and found value to be a significant predictor of satisfaction.

It is not debated in the literature that increasing visitor loyalty is vital for the success of tourism organizations. However, it has not been fully determined which variable has the largest contribution to increasing that loyalty. Satisfaction has been found to strongly influence loyalty. Service quality and value have also been shown to be significant predictors of loyalty as well as play a role in overall satisfaction. It is clear that more research needs to be done involving visitor loyalty and how satisfaction, service quality, and value contribute to increasing visitor loyalty.

Research Questions

Based on a review of literature the researchers sought to develop a better understanding of golf tourists’ travel motivation and loyalty by advancing the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Does the perceived value of the travel experience predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word of mouth recommendations and re-purchase intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?
Research Question 2: Does satisfaction with the travel experience predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word of mouth recommendations and re-purchase intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Research Question 3: Does service quality associated with the travel experience predict the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word of mouth recommendations and re-purchase intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Research Question 4: Which variable, service quality, value, or satisfaction, is the strongest predictor of the likelihood of loyalty in the form of positive word of mouth recommendations and re-purchase intentions in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Research Question 5: Do the variables of service quality and value predict the likelihood of satisfaction with the travel experience in golf tourists to rural destinations?

Methods

Participants

Participants included in this study were individuals that purchased and completed a golf vacation package in a rural location. These individuals purchased their golf package through an entity that focuses exclusively on organizing golf packages at rural destinations. The golf vacation packages include golf and lodging accommodations and ranged from two to four days. Participants purchased their golf vacation package from one of two organizations in the upper Midwest United States. These golf organizations were selected because of their popularity within the respective regions, rural locations, and access to an adequate sample size. All travelers that participated in one of these golf packages were not included in this study. Only individuals that provided contact information in the form of an email address to the golf organizations were included in the
study. The participants generally served as the primary contact for their travel parties. Individuals were required to be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study. An incentive to participate was provided to the individuals that chose to complete the survey in the form of a chance to obtain a discount on a future golf package.

**Instrument**

The instrument used for this study was comprised of five sections: satisfaction with the golf vacation, perceived service quality, perceived value of the golf package, loyalty to the golf destination (future intentions), and visitor demographics. The instrument was constructed by the researchers using existing scales that have been shown to be reliable and valid. The constructs and scale items can be found in Table 2. Steps were taken to increase the content validity of the scales. First, an extensive literature review was conducted to find existing measures for the desired constructs that were valid and reliable. Second, the golf course managers and package administrators individually reviewed the questionnaire for clarity and suitability for context. The questionnaire was revised according to the feedback received.

The satisfaction scale was adapted from Petrick and Backman (2002b) and Hutchinson et al. (2009). The scale was used to measure the satisfaction of golf tourists in the southern region of the United States in both studies. The satisfaction scale contains four items intended to be a cumulative global measurement of overall satisfaction with the golf travel experience. All items used a seven-point Likert scale. The first satisfaction item is anchored from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied*. The second satisfaction item is anchored from *very displeased* to *very pleased*. The third satisfaction item is anchored from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The fourth item is anchored from *regretful* to
delightful. Respondents’ score for overall satisfaction was determined by the mean response of all four items. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Petrick and Backman (2002b) with a reliability coefficient of .96 and by Hutchinson et al. (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .953 and factor loadings of .833 to .953.

Service quality was measured using five items from Hutchinson et al. (2009). This scale was used to measure the service quality perceptions of 309 golf tourists in the Gulf South region of the United States. The service quality items are consistent with the five SERVQUAL dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). All service quality items used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Respondents’ score for overall service quality was determined by the mean response of all four items. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid as reported by Hutchinson et al. (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .968 and factor loadings of .91 to .93.

The value scale was adapted from an instrument used by Petrick and Backman (2002) in a study that measured the perceived value of 448 golf tourists in the Southeast Unites States. The value scale contained four items intended to be a cumulative global measurement of the participants’ perceived value of the golf travel experience. The four value items used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Respondents’ score for overall value was determined by the mean response of all four items. This instrument has been shown be reliable and valid as reported by Petrick and Backman (2002a) with a reliability coefficient of .93 and factor loadings of .84 to .93.

Loyalty was measured using two constructs, revisit intentions and positive word of mouth intentions. The loyalty scale was adapted from an instrument used by Walker
and Kent (2009) which was also developed using the guidance of previous literature (Cronin et al., 2000; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The scale contains seven items, four items for revisit intentions and three items for word of mouth intentions. All of the loyalty items used a seven-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale has been shown to reliable and valid as reported by Walker and Kent (2009) with a reliability coefficient of .83 to .93.

The final section of the survey contained information about visitor demographics that included: age, gender, ethnicity, income, length of stay, size of travel party, distance travelled, spending, and golfing frequency.

Procedures

To initiate the study, the researcher contacted each of the golf organizations separately. A thorough explanation of the study as well as the potential benefits was provided to the organizations by the researchers. Two golf organizations, each specializing in rural golf travel packages, agreed to participate in the study and provided written consent. Using online survey software, the instrument was sent electronically to each of the participating golf organizations for review and approval. The golf organizations then sent the instruments to the participants via email. A cover letter accompanied the instrument explaining the purpose of the study, how to complete the survey, an assurance of confidentiality, and how to contact the researcher with any questions. To maximize the response rate a modified Dillman (2000) technique was used. A reminder email was sent one week after the original message was sent, then again two weeks after the original message was sent. Data collection ended three weeks after participants received the original message.
All contact with the participants was strictly through the golf organization from which they purchased a golf package. At no time did the researcher directly contact the participants or have access to any of the participants' contact information. No identifiable information was ever made available to the researcher. This was a measure agreed upon by the researcher and the golf organizations as a stipulation for participating in the study to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity.

Results

Out of 635 surveys that were distributed, 316 responses were received resulting in a response rate of 49.7%. 88 incomplete questionnaires were removed leaving 228 questionnaires to be included in the data analysis. Results indicated that 90.6% of the participants were male and 9.4% were female. In terms of ethnicity 97.8% of the respondents were Caucasian with the other ethnicities represented being Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian. The average age of the participants was 48.2 years old. 25.8% were between 50-59 years old, 23.5% were between 30-39, 22.5% were between 60-69, 15.8% were between 40-49, 9.6% were between 23-29, and 2.9% were over 70 years old. The respondents appear to be well-educated with 78.2% having attended at least a four-year college with 28.6% having earned an advanced degree. The golfers appear to have above average incomes with 70.5% of the respondent indicating that they had an annual income of $80,000 or higher with 31.5% earning between $100,000-$150,000. The average length of the golf package was 3.2 days with 70.1% of the respondents spending exactly three days and 16.7% spending four days on the golf vacation. The average distance traveled to participate in the golf package was 381.6 miles with 67.7% travelling 300 miles or farther; highlighting the rural location of the golf
packages. The average travel party included 6.37 individuals with 44.8% of the respondents being part of a 4 person travel party. As might be expected, 36.4% of the respondents completed the golf vacation in June, followed by 20.6% in July, and 18% in August. Only 38.5% of the respondents indicated that they were a member of a golf course or country club. However, 69.8% indicated that they played golf 1 or more times per week. An entire demographic profile can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Respondent Demographic Profile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 &amp; over</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year College</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year College</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Graduate School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Degree</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ $20,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$39,999</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$59,999</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$79,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-$99,999</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$149,999</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$199,999</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥$200,000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Associates</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Spending</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1-$50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51-$100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$101-$150</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$151-$200</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$201-$250</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$251-$300</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$301-$350</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$351-$400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥$400</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Golfing Frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 2 times per year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 times per year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 time per month</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 times per month</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 time per week</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more times per week</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Golf Membership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

To examine reliability of the scales used in this study Cronbach’s α coefficient was calculated. All scales were found to have reliability coefficients greater that .70 and deemed acceptable (Warner, 2008). The Cronbach α coefficients for the scales used in this study ranged from .781 to .953 (Table 2). Table 6 provides correlations among the nine constructs used in the study.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and Coefficients (α) of Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct (Items)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I received a good value for my money spent on my golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I got my money’s worth on my golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After evaluating my golf vacation package, I feel a received a high quality for what I paid.</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My golf vacation met both my quality and price expectations.</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average the employees I came into contact with:</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were friendly and courteous.</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provided prompt service.</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were always willing to help.</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were knowledgeable about the services available.</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were professional and gave you confidence.</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct (Items)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your satisfaction with your golf package?</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you pleased with your golf package?</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was content with my experience on my golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your experience while on your golf vacation package?</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repurchase Intentions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization in the near future.</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization in the next few years.</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase my next golf vacation package from this organization.</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will purchase another golf package from this organization.</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word-of-Mouth Intentions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will speak favorably of this golf package to others.</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will encourage others to purchase a golf package from this organization.</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will encourage others to support this golf vacation package.</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted for the purpose of determining which of the three variables, satisfaction, value, and service quality, made a significant contribution to the prediction of the golf tourists’ repurchase intentions and word of mouth intentions. The variables of satisfaction, value, and service quality were entered into the regression as independent variables while repurchase intentions was entered as the dependent variable in the first regression and word-of-mouth intentions was entered as the dependent variable for the second regression. In a third regression, service quality
and value were entered as independent variables with satisfaction as the dependent variable. In a stepwise regression the variable that explains the most variance is entered first followed by each successive variable accounting for the most variance not explained by the first variable and so on. Only variables that make a significant contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable are allowed to be entered into the model. This method was chosen because the intent of this study was to determine which variables are the best predictors of satisfaction and future intentions, not to develop the best overall prediction model. Tolerance statistics were calculated to determine whether any multicollinearity issues existed. There was no evidence of multicollinearity amongst the predictor variables. All tolerance statistics were well above the .01 level (Meyers, et al., 2006).

In the first regression, only satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of repurchase intentions (Table 3). Satisfaction accounted for approximately 17% of the variance in repurchase intentions ($R^2 = .168$, $F = 42.477$, $t = 6.517$, $p < .001$).

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Prediction of Repurchase Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>6.517</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>1.417</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second regression all three variables, satisfaction, value, and service quality, were found to be significant predictors of the golfers’ word of mouth intentions (Table 4). Approximately 48.5% of the variance in word of mouth intentions was
attributed to the three variables ($R^2 = .485, F = 65.210, p < .001$). Satisfaction was the largest contributor ($\beta = .347, t = 5.522, p < .001$), followed by value ($\beta = .277, t = 4.278, p < .001$), then service quality ($\beta = .226, t = 3.957, p < .001$).

Table 4

*Regression Coefficients for Prediction of Word-of-Mouth Intentions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.347</td>
<td>5.522</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>4.278</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>3.957</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the third regression indicated that the both value and service quality were significant predictors of the golf tourists’ satisfaction (Table 5). These two variables accounted for approximately 37% of the golfers’ satisfaction ($R^2 = .373, F = 63.437, p < .001$). Value was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .511, t = 8.390, p < .001$), followed by service quality ($\beta = .175, t = 2.877, p = .004$).

Table 5

*Regression Coefficients for Prediction of Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>.349</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.511</td>
<td>8.390</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>2.877</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Correlations Among Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.590</td>
<td>.411</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurchase Intentions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-of-Mouth Intentions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

As competition in the golf tourism industry increases it becomes more of a challenge to attract visitors to a destination that are likely to be satisfied as well as make a return visit. Therefore, customer retention through understanding value, service quality, and satisfaction should become an important pursuit for any sport tourism organization. Past research provides evidence that there is a positive relationship between the variables of value, service quality, satisfaction and visitor future intentions (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b; Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002; Zeithaml et al., 1996). This study was designed to examine the relationships between golf travelers’ perceived value, service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, specifically repurchase and word of mouth intentions. Results of the current study have both theoretical and managerial implications. Theoretically the study adds to the knowledge of the causal order of the constructs of value, service, quality, and satisfaction, and their relationship to consumer’s future intentions. From a managerial
perspective the results can provide a method of identifying how organizational resources can best be allocated to improve the financial efficiency of the organization.

Results support past research that there is a positive relationship between value, service quality, satisfaction, and future intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick, 2004; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002c; Petrick et al., 1999; Petrick et al., 2001; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The results indicate that service quality and value, with value having the strongest impact, lead to satisfaction, which in turn, lead to positive repurchase and word of mouth intentions. This is similar to the findings of Petrick (2004). Based on the findings of this study it appears that value and satisfaction are the strongest predictors of visitor loyalty, with satisfaction being the strongest predictor of both repurchase and word of mouth intentions.

In regard to the research questions investigated satisfaction uniquely explained golfers intentions to repurchase a golf package, value and service quality did not make a significant contribution. Satisfaction, service quality, and value all uniquely explained word of mouth intentions. Of the three variables, satisfaction again appeared to be the strongest predictor of word of mouth intentions, followed by value, then service quality. Value and service quality were both significant predictors of satisfaction, with value having the largest contribution. It appears that value and service quality are antecedents of satisfaction, and in turn, satisfaction is an antecedent of repurchase and word of mouth intentions.

These findings are consistent with previous literature in that satisfaction is crucial for obtaining re-visit intentions as well as positive word of mouth recommendations.
(Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hennessy et al., 2007; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Lee, 2009; Petrick et al., 2001; Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002c; Tian-Cole et al., 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It appears that satisfaction was the only variable that made a significant contribution to the prediction of repurchase intentions. However, it does appear that service quality and value have an indirect effect on repurchase intentions through satisfaction.

The results of the study also confirm the importance of considering value when predicting visitor satisfaction (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Cronin et al., 2000; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Petrick et al., 2001). Service quality was not significant in the prediction of repurchase intentions and provided minimal contribution to the prediction of word of mouth intentions and satisfaction. This supports prior research that suggests that value and satisfaction may be more important variables than service quality (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005; Petrick & Backman, 2002b). Satisfaction also had a much higher influence on word of mouth intentions than it did on repurchase intentions. This is similar to what Hutchinson et al. (2009) found, suggesting that other constraints are likely present in predicting repurchase intention.

Managerial Implications

Based on the results of this study it does appear that the golf travel market is a viable opportunity to grow and maintain visitation to a rural destination. It has been noted that rural areas often do not have a great amount of tourism management resources (Devesa et al., 2010; Greffe, 1994). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for rural destinations to allocate resources that are available in the most efficient manner possible.
Results of the investigation provide valuable insight related to this use of resources for golf and tourism managers. The results suggest that managers need to understand their customers’ satisfaction, value, and service quality if they wish to develop repeat business. The findings suggest that if managers are only to select one variable to improve visitor loyalty, satisfaction would be the preferred variable. However satisfaction measures alone fail to provide enough information to respond to visitor needs as it is a very broad concept. Results suggest that value may be the most practical variable available to management for implementing operational changes necessary for increasing repeat business and positive word of mouth recommendations.

Rural destinations hoping to attract and retain golf travelers should focus resources on providing a quality experience at a good value compared to what visitors might find in a more urbanized area, and promote it as such. Based on the results of this study it is important for golf packages be priced competitively due to the influence that value had on visitor satisfaction. Results of this study indicate that service quality is an important component of word of mouth intention and overall satisfaction. However, if rural destinations are faced with limited resources to promote and implement golf tourism programs, it appears that value should be a higher priority that service quality.

Limitations

As with any study, there are certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The current study was limited due to the fact that participants were only sampled from two locations in one state in the upper Midwest United States. It would be beneficial to seek a more representative sample from a broader range of locations to determine if the results from the current study can be generalized to the larger rural golf tourism population or
the larger rural or golf tourism populations. The study was also limited by not randomly selecting a rural destination that offered golf packages as well as only analyzing golf visitors from one golfing season. Selecting multiple rural golf locations over multiple seasons would add to the validity of the study. Another limitation of the study was asking respondents to recall prior experiences rather than measuring the experience in real time. Surveying participants on location as they finished the golf package could also add validity to the current study. The data collected for this study was neither experimental nor longitudinal and, therefore, causal relationships should be interpreted with caution. Further research is needed to determine if the results can be generalized to all golf travelers or all rural destinations.

Future Research

Because the current study is believed to be the first to analyze the chosen variables for golf tourists specifically in a rural setting the study provides empirical evidence for previous relationships among the variables of value, service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, but also provides future direction for further examining these relationships. Most important from a managerial perspective is the actual re-visitation. Future research may need to examine how the chosen variables are able to predict the actual repurchase of the golf package. This could prove to be the most valuable for practitioners. It is also possible that the prediction model presented could be beneficial beyond golf tourists. Rural areas may benefit from examining the prediction of revisit intentions of all types of activities and destinations in order to capitalize on the benefits of tourism. It is possible that one reason service quality was the least predictive of the three dependent variables might be that high levels of service are not often associated
with high value. Are the golfers’ service quality expectations lowered because of the emphasis placed on value? Future research would benefit from an examination of the current variables in regard to packages involving prestigious or exclusive golf courses, ideally in rural locations. Future research should also examine golf travelers in different geographical regions as well as internationally in order to better generalize the results of this study. It may also be beneficial to investigate value, service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty based on certain demographic variables such as age, income, or gender.

This manuscript will be submitted to *The Journal of Sport and Tourism* for publication.
REFERENCES


INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12072601
PROJECT TITLE: Examining the Impact of Motivation, Service Quality, and Value on Satisfaction and Loyalty Among Golf Tourists to Rural Areas
PROJECT TYPE: Thesis
RESEARCHER/S: Chad W. Maas
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Health
DEPARTMENT: Human Performance & Recreation
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 07/26/2012 to 07/25/2013

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
Dear Participant:

For completing this survey and agreeing to participate in this study you will be entered for a chance to obtain a $100.00 discount on a future golf package. This survey is part of a research project studying golf tourism in rural areas. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about those who visit rural golf destinations; what influenced you to purchase a golf package in a rural area; and how that information can be used to better promote golf as a form of tourism in rural areas. The survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time. All responses will be completely anonymous. None of your personal information has been given to the researchers as part of this project. This was a measure agreed upon by the researcher and the golf vendor as a stipulation for participating in the study to ensure confidentiality and anonymity as well as a way to protect the trust and privacy of their customers. This research project is part of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Southern Mississippi. The importance of your participation and assistance with this project cannot be overstated. If you have any questions regarding the procedures or results of this survey contact Chad Maas, doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi and Assistant Professor of Sport Management at Wayne State College, Wayne, NE. He may be contacted at 402-375-7132 or chmaas1@WSC.edu. This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

Yes, I will take the survey at this time (1)

No, I do not wish to participate (2)
Have you completed your golf vacation package?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Which package did you purchase and complete?

Play the West (1)
Golf the North (2)
Honey Creek Resort (3)

Which month did you complete your golf vacation package?

January (1)
February (2)
March (3)
April (4)
May (5)
June (6)
July (7)
August (8)
September (9)
October (10)
November (11)
December (12)

Have you purchased this same package in the past?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Have you purchased a similar package from a different organization in the past?

Yes (please describe) (1) ____________________
No (2)
For the following questions, please choose the response that best describes why you were motivated to purchase the golf package. I purchased my golf vacation package to ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree (5)</th>
<th>Agree (6)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (7)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mix with new people (1)</td>
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<td>Have fun with others (2)</td>
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<td>Socialize with others (3)</td>
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<td>Be distracted from my normal life for a while (4)</td>
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<td>Forget my worries (5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree (1)</td>
<td>Disagree (2)</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree (3)</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree (5)</td>
<td>Agree (6)</td>
<td>Strongly Agree (7)</td>
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<td>Get away from the routine of everyday life (6)</td>
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<td>Go places my friends have not been (7)</td>
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<td>Build Memories (1)</td>
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<td>Share my experiences when I return home (2)</td>
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<td>Enjoy good weather (3)</td>
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<td>Relax (4)</td>
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<td>Be emotionally refreshed (5)</td>
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<td>Meet people from rural areas (6)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How would you rate your satisfaction with your golf vacation package?

Very Dissatisfied (1)
Dissatisfied (2)
Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)
Neutral (4)
Somewhat Satisfied (5)
Satisfied (6)
Very Satisfied (7)

Were you pleased with your golf vacation package?

Very Displeased (1)
Displeased (2)
Somewhat Displeased (3)
Neutral (4)
Somewhat Pleased (5)
Pleased (6)
Very Pleased (7)

I was content with my experience on my golf vacation package.

Strongly Disagree (1)
Disagree (2)
Somewhat Disagree (3)
Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)
Somewhat Agree (5)
Agree (6)
Strongly Agree (7)

How would you describe your experience while on your golf vacation package?

Regretful (1)
Poor (2)
Fair (3)
Good (4)
Very Good (5)
Excellent (6)
Delightful (7)
For the following questions, please choose the response that best describes how you felt about the value of the golf vacation package you purchased.

| I feel I received a good value for my money spent while on my golf vacation. (1) | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Somewhat Disagree (3) | Neither Agree nor Disagree (4) | Somewhat Agree (5) | Agree (6) | Strongly Agree (7) |
| I feel that I got my money’s worth for my golf vacation. (2) | | | | | | | |
| After evaluating my golf vacation, I received high quality for what I paid. (3) | | | | | | | |
| My golf vacation met both my price and quality expectations (4) | | | | | | | |
For the following questions, please choose the response that best describes how you felt about the service quality you encountered while on your golf vacation. On average, employees I came into contact with.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>were friendly and courteous. (1)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree (5)</th>
<th>Agree (6)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (7)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provided prompt service. (2)</td>
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<td>were always willing to help. (3)</td>
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<td>were knowledgeable about the services available. (4)</td>
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<td>were professional and gave you confidence. (5)</td>
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</table>

Please comment on any specific concerns you had related to the above questions.
For the following questions, please choose the response that best describes your repurchase intentions for the golf package you completed. I will purchase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree (5)</th>
<th>Agree (6)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (7)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>another golf package</td>
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<td>through this organization in the near future. (1)</td>
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<td>another golf package</td>
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<td>through this organization in the next few years. (2)</td>
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<td>my next golf vacation package through this organization. (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>another golf vacation package through this organization. (4)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
For the following questions, please choose the response that best describes your word of mouth intentions for the golf package you completed. I will ......

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree (3)</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree (5)</th>
<th>Agree (6)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speak favorably of this golf package to others. (1) encourage others to purchase a golf vacation package from this organization. (2) encourage others to support this golf vacation package. (3)</td>
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</table>

What is your age?

Gender:

Male (1)
Female (2)

How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

Caucasian (1)
Hispanic (2)
Asian/Asian American (3)
Black/ African American (4)
American Indian (5)
Other (6)
What is your profession?

How many days did you spend on your golf vacation?

How many individuals were in your travel party, including you?

What is the zip code of your home residence?

Approximately how far did you travel to participate in the golf package?

Which category best describes your household income?

Less than $20,000 (1)
$20,000-$39,999 (2)
$40,000-$59,999 (3)
$60,000-$79,999 (4)
$80,000-$99,999 (5)
$100,000-$149,999 (6)
$150,000-$199,999 (7)
Above $200,000 (8)
Approximately how much did you spend per day on expenses not included in your golf package? (shopping, entertainment, food, etc)

- $0 (1)
- $1-$50 (2)
- $51-$100 (3)
- $101-$150 (4)
- $151-$200 (5)
- $201-$250 (6)
- $251-$300 (7)
- $301-$350 (8)
- $351-$400 (9)
- More than $400 (10)

How did you hear about the golf package that you purchased?

- Website (1)
- Email (2)
- Online Advertisement (3)
- Newspaper Advertisement (4)
- Brochure (5)
- Golf Magazine (6)
- Word of Mouth (7)

Which of the following best describes your travel group?

- Alone (1)
- Family (2)
- Friends (3)
- Business Associates (4)
- Tour Group (5)
- Other (6) ____________________

What is your highest level of education?

- High School (1)
- 2-year college (2)
- 4-year college (3)
- Advanced degree (4)
Are you a member of a golf course or country club?

Yes (1)
No (2)

Which of the following best describes your golfing frequency?

3 or less times per year (1)
3-5 times per year (2)
1 time per month (3)
2-3 times per month (4)
1 time per week (5)
2 or more times per week (6)

What is your preferred method of communication?

Mail (1)
Phone (2)
Email (3)
Social Media (4)
Website (5)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The appreciation of your participation cannot be overstated. For participating in this survey you have the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for a $100.00 discount on your next golf package. If you would like to be entered into this drawing please provide your email address in the box below. Thank you again.