Golf has been one of the popular recreational activities in the United States for a long time. According to the most recent report presented by the National Golf Foundation (NGF, 2006), the total number of rounds played in the United States has steadily increased for the past three years. Compared with the number of rounds, the NGF report shows that the total number of golfers in the United States has been relatively stable for the past two decades, and actually decreased for the past five years. Nevertheless, the total number of golf courses has continually increased (NGF, 2007). While fewer people are playing more rounds of golf, the range of golf course choices from which golfers can select has expanded. Accordingly, this increase has resulted in a keen competition among golf course managers how they market their courses. The study of golf course marketing may provide golf course managers with the information necessary to improve the quality of service and satisfaction in the relationship to price in order to attract potential golfers and retain their current golfers.

Given the expansion of the golf industry, not only can the study of golf course management including service quality and price be a catalyst for the golf industry but also the study of customer satisfaction and revisit intentions of golfers can provide information that encourages people to select golf as their recreational and leisure activity. Many studies asserted the positive effects of highly perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and the positive effects of increased customer satisfaction on repurchase intentions in a variety of settings (e.g., Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Boshoff & Gray, 2004; Cann, 1995; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2000; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Mittal, Ross, & Baldasare, 1998; Petrick, Tonner, & Quinn, 2006; Rosenbaum, Massiah, & Jackson, 2006; Singh, 1990; Yu, Chang, & Huang, 2006). In addition, several studies indicated that satisfaction with price is positively related to customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Grewal, Hardesty, & Iyer, 2004; Homburg, Hoyer, & Koschate, 2005; Matzler, Würtele, & Renzl, 2006). The levels of satisfaction related to service quality and price could have significant implications for the golf management. In turn, satisfaction with service quality and fees will likely impact intentions to revisit.

Though many researchers described relationships among service quality, price, customer satisfaction, and revisit intentions in a variety of contexts, little research on the purposes, methods, and effectiveness of golf course marketing and management practices has been conducted (Petrick & Backman, 2002a, 2002b). Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether perceived service quality and price have positive effects on customer satisfaction, and then directly and indirectly influence revisit intentions and that customer satisfaction positively impacts revisit intentions. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among perceived service quality, price, customer satisfaction, and revisit intentions in the golf context. As a fundamental framework, a model of the relationships among perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intentions presented by Cronin and Taylor (1992) was used. It provided that improved service quality positively influenced customer satisfaction, and in turn this satisfaction resulted in increased repurchase intentions. In addition, price for playing golf was included as a significant factor influencing customer satisfaction in the golf context since some scholars demonstrated the positive relationship between perceived quality and price (Lambert, 1972; Monroe & Krishnan, 1985; Olson, 1977; Shapiro, 1973).

The questionnaire to measure service quality was chosen from Ko and Pastore’s (2005) hierarchical model of service quality for the recreational sport industry with small modification. The questionnaire to measure price, customer satisfaction, and revisit intentions was modified based on published studies as well. To refine the instrument, content and face validity was assessed through a panel of experts and a pilot test. The instrument consisted of five sections: (1) demographic information, (2) service quality, (3) price for playing golf, (4) customer satisfaction, and (5) revisit intentions.

A total of 365 golfers living in Georgia participated in this study. The average age of the participants was 32.66 years (SD = 11.85). Of the 365 participants, the majority were male (73.4%) and Caucasian/White (51.2%). The average
In order to test the measurement model, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilized for the construct validity. For the convergent validity, all items’ loading values were bigger than twice their standard error. For the discriminant validity, all estimated correlation values for service quality were less than .85. In addition, all estimated correlation values for all latent factors were less than .85. These support that the constructs both for service quality, price and for all latent factors were statistically significant.

In order to investigate the validation of the proposed constructs of service quality, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Overall, the result of the measurement model test for service quality showed a good model fit, suggesting that the chosen indicators loaded on the construct in an appropriate manner. Three types of model fit indexes demonstrated the good model fit: RMSEA(.059), CFI(.97), and 2/df(2.28). The results of the SEM for the structural model referred to no offending estimates in all factor loadings and an acceptable model fit of the structural model to data. The structural model had adequate goodness-of-fit values (RMSEA = .07; CFI = .91; 2/df = 2.77).

Given the acceptable fit of the model of perceived service quality (PSQ), price (P), customer satisfaction (CS), and revisit intentions (RI), the direct, indirect, and total effects were investigated. The direct effect of PSQ on CS was .79, which showed the statistically significant positive relationship at the .05 level (z = 9.48). The direct effect (.40) and indirect effect (.28), of PSQ on RI were statistically significant at the .05 level (z = 3.82). However, P had the low effects on both CS (.09) and RI (.04 for direct; .03 for indirect), and these effects were not significant at the .05 level (z = 1.94; z = .83). Finally, there was a significant positive effect (.36) of CS on RI at the .05 level (z = 3.42).

Furthermore, 69% of the variance in CS was explained by the determinants of PSQ and P. 55% of the variance in RI was accounted for by the determinants of PSQ, P, and CS.

As the results of the test of the structural model, perceived service quality positively influenced customer satisfaction and revisit intentions. Also, customer satisfaction positively affected revisit intentions. However, price did not significantly impact both customer satisfaction and revisit intentions. The results of this study provided golf course managers as well as leisure facility managers with meaningful and practical information. In the management perspective, it is important to be aware of the ways to attract more customers and hold the current consumers. Furthermore, this study suggests that golf course managers have to find the ways to improve service quality of their golf courses. From the perspective of the total quality management (TQM), improving service quality can be critical for the golf course management. De Knop, Van Hoecke, and De Bosscher (2004) asserted that the TQM is a management approach to achieve quality through the participation of all organizational members and that customer satisfaction is very important for the long-term success of organizations and societies. According to the results of this study, highly perceived service quality of golf courses positively influenced customer satisfaction. Consequently, it would be beneficial for golf course managers to enhance service quality in order to reach long-term success of management. In conclusion, golf course managers should pay more attention to improve the quality of service in order to retain current and potential consumers.

This study explored the relationships among perceived service quality, price, customer satisfaction, and revisit intentions in the golf context. Knowledge of determinants of overall satisfaction would help golf course managers understand how to promote more interest for their golf courses. For the future study, more suitable inventories of service quality for the specific leisure settings should be developed. The inventory to measure service quality has
been developed in a variety of fields for the past 20 years. Yet, in spite of the continuous studies, it is still in need of development because different fields may require different inventories of service quality.