

The Effect of the Variables on Spectators' Desire to Stay at Professional Golf Tournament in Japan

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Many researchers have focused on clarifying spectator motives or services, scholars have not examined which spectator demands cause them to remain at a sports venue for long periods of time (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). In contrast, event services (such as trade fairs, motor shows, and sporting events) generally require customers to spend extended periods of time in the physical surroundings of a service provider (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). In such cases, the perceived quality of the market demand (e.g., the game itself or player performance) and servicescape (i.e., the physical environment) may play an important role in determining consumer satisfaction, which in turn influences how long spectators desire to stay at an event (and hence how much money they will spend) and whether they intend to re-patronize events held by the event organizer (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Zhang et al., 2003, 2005). Unlike comparable expenditures on most tangible products, attendance at a sporting event includes an intention to stay at the service event for an extended period of time. Spectators who enjoy spending time at an event are assumed to be more likely to return to the same event or a similar event in the future (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994, 1996). Conversely, negative experiences at an event site are likely to reduce a patron's desire to remain at an event and perhaps cause him or her to leave the event earlier and avoid returning to similar events in the future. Thus, when spectators attend games, the environment (i.e., event management in consideration of core products and peripheral services) may play a significant role in determining their enjoyment of such experiences. However, few studies that employ sports spectators as subjects reveal which approaches can encourage spectators to attend an event and stay at the event venue. In particular, unlike baseball or soccer, professional golf tournament events constitute an entire day, and the spectators' period of stay is long. Whereas research on conventional spectator behavior, service quality and satisfaction has typically examined the behaviors of spectators attending established team sports, such as football or baseball, this study is distinctive in attempting to conduct spectator research relative to an individual sport rather than a team sport and to conduct research without accumulated previous studies rather than more established sports research. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of market demands and peripheral services at professional golf tournaments in Japan on spectators' desire to stay at and re-patronize these events.

The research subjects in this study were selected from spectators at the 23rd Ito-En Ladies Golf Tournament of the LPGA regular tour in Japan. The researchers distributed a written questionnaire to the golf spectators at the event area and entrance hall during the three days of the event. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 293 usable questionnaires were collected for a return rate of 97.6%. The questionnaires were adapted and modified from previous professional golf spectator researches (Hansen & Gauthier, 1993, 1994) and other spectator service researches (Wakefield's studies, 1996, 1998). The analysis of data was performed using Amos 16.0 and SPSS 16.0. Using SPSS 16.0, hierarchical regression analysis was employed. On the basis of Amos 16.0, confirmatory factor analysis was employed to identify the construct validity for all latent dimensions. The instruments used composed 22 items with 7 dimensions; "affection to players (2 items)," "the game of golf (4 items)," "the course setting (3 items)," "hospitality and service management (5 items)," "accessibility (3 items)," "the desire to stay (3 items)," and "re-patronage (2 items)."

The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) for the conceptual model indicated an acceptable fit to the data: $NC = 2.52$, $CFI = .910$, $SRMR = .056$, and $RMSEA = .072$, with the 90% confidence interval .064 - .081. Affection to player, the game of golf and the course setting, which constituted the core products, were significant influences on the desire to stay (affection to player: $r = .368$, $p < .01$; game of golf: $r = .241$, $p < .05$; course setting: $r = .340$, $p < .05$). Similarly, as a result of the influence of these factors on re-patronage intentions, among the core products, only the game of golf significantly influenced spectators' re-patronage intentions ($r = .429$, $p < .001$). For peripheral services, both hospitality and service management and accessibility significantly influenced re-patronage intentions

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(hospitality and service management: $r = -.332$, $p < .01$; accessibility: $r = .248$, $p < .05$). A significant relationship between the desire to stay and re-patronage intentions ($r = .511$, $p < .001$) was also found

In conclusion, core products and peripheral services had an influence on desire to stay of the spectator, and research findings have shown a strong re-patronage relation to the desire to stay at four tournaments. Event organizer can use the results provided in this study to assist them in their development of a systematic marketing plan that efficiently satisfies the demands of current and potential spectators.