

The Sport and Museum Connection: Assessing Spectator Satisfaction at a Golf Tournament Using Museum Research

Marian H. Wooten, Anthony W. Dixon, William C. Norman, PhD, Robert S. Brookover, PhD
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management
Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina

Introduction

Very little museum visitor research has been integrated into tourism research, although the museum can be regarded as a tourist attraction. Research about visitors to museums has great potential to contribute to current tourism research, as illustrated in the work of Falk and Dierking (1992) concerning the shaping of the visitor's impressions while at an attraction. Falk and Dierking cite museum guards, the museum entryway, the information desk, the gift shop, the guided tour, and the restaurant/snack bar as playing a role in shaping the visitor's museum experience. While Falk and Dierking's research concerns the museum experience, the importance they find visitors attribute to individuals, objects, and environments other than those for which they specifically attend the attraction, informs many types of attractions, including those within the realm of sport.

The elements (or attributes) of the attraction, whether integral to the emphasis of the visit or not, shape the visitor's overall experience and thus influence the visitor's satisfaction (Costa, Glinia, Goudas, & Antoniou, 2004). Because satisfaction relates to "a broader assessment of the consumer's experiences" (Crompton, et al, 1991, cited in Tian-Cole & Crompton, 2003), it cannot be limited to specific encounters but encompasses the entire, cumulative experience at and with the destination, or attraction (Tian-Cole & Crompton). Therefore, tourist satisfaction should be investigated as composed of all elements of the experience. A previous study used satisfaction with multiple attributes to measure global satisfaction with a SCUBA destination in Malaysia (Musa, 2002). Results of the study suggest tourist's satisfaction was composed of setting attributes (including water temperature marine life, and coral reef), facilities and equipment, and knowledgeable dive masters. Additionally, Lee, Shafer, and Kang (2005) proposed that overall satisfaction is established by a collection of episode-specific evaluations (i.e., quality of food, service at destination, parking, traffic, and setting attributes). Results showed that individuals used cumulative evaluations in determining their overall satisfaction. These previous studies support Falk and Dierking's (1992) research indicating extraneous elements play a significant role in determining overall satisfaction. This study seeks to find out the importance of satisfaction with individual elements of the experience on global satisfaction for individuals visiting a coastal golf tournament.

Problem

The PGA held its 37th annual golf tournament on a barrier island off the South Carolina coast in April 2005. This tournament can be considered a visitor attraction, as can a museum. Using Falk and Dierking's (1992) findings about the elements shaping a museum visitor's experience,

researchers set out to determine what elements influenced spectator (or visitor) satisfaction to the PGA tournament. Three research questions guided this investigation:

RQ₁: How do spectators rate overall tournament satisfaction?

RQ₂: How do spectators rate satisfaction with the tournament and elements surrounding it?

RQ₃: Do elements surrounding the tournament predict tournament satisfaction?

Methods

Twelve researchers systematically intercepted every fifth spectator to cross an imaginary line at ten sites within the tournament over a seven day period. Willing spectators took approximately ten minutes to complete a questionnaire administered as an interview. This resulted in 898 completed interviews, for a response rate of 46.3%. Tournament spectators rated overall satisfaction with the tournament and their satisfaction with sixteen additional elements. Only two elements related directly to the intended experience of watching play: satisfaction with the players and satisfaction with location to watch play. Ten elements addressed satisfaction with the other aspects of the tournament: how the tournament was run, badge price, food at the tournament, alcoholic beverages at the tournament, the tournament transportation system, availability of tournament information, tournament staff, tournament volunteers, parking at the tournament, and traffic within the resort encompassing the golf course. Four elements dealt with the satisfaction of the island upon which the golf course was located: food on the island, accommodations (presumably on the island or in the coastal area), island nightlife, and on-island traffic.

Results

Spectators rated their overall satisfaction with the tournament and the sixteen elements using a five point Likert type scale, where 1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=unsure, 4=satisfied, and 5=very satisfied. Overall satisfaction with the tournament was high ($m=4.69$), and mean scores for the elements reveal a high level of satisfaction (Table 1). The highest levels of satisfaction were reported for how the tournament was being run, tournament volunteers, tournament staff, and locations to watch play. Lowest levels of satisfaction were reported for traffic within the resort and on the island.

A regression analysis was used to determine the ability of individual elements and their interaction to predict overall tournament satisfaction. The model was significant at a 0.05 level ($F=15.101$, $p<0.001$) and predicted approximately 25% of variance ($R^2=0.247$). Only three variables proved significant: satisfaction with how the tournament was run ($t=8.593$, $p<0.001$), satisfaction with players at the tournament ($t=6.391$, $p<0.001$), and the interaction term ($t=-2.517$, $p=0.012$). A significant interaction term indicates the effect of one element depended upon the effect of the other elements.

Element	Mean
<i>Watching Play</i>	
players at tournament	4.05
location to watch play	4.64
<i>Other Aspects of the Tournament</i>	
how the tournament was run	4.72
badge price	4.34
food at the tournament	4.07
alcoholic beverages at the tournament	4.23
the tournament transportation system	4.24
availability of tournament information	4.44
tournament staff	4.64
tournament volunteers	4.66
parking at the tournament	4.03
traffic within the resort	3.66
<i>Island</i>	
food on the island	4.54
accommodations	4.45
island nightlife	4.10
on-island traffic	3.47

Conclusions

Significant elements revealed that more than the players and the locations to watch play determined satisfaction with the overall experience. Given the nature of the attraction, that satisfaction with players was significant was not surprising. However, the significance of satisfaction with way the tournament was run and the interaction term show that other elements strongly influence spectators, as suggested by Falk and Dierking (1992). The significant interaction term indicates that spectators used all elements of the attraction in determining their overall satisfaction.

Applications

Results apply to many types of tourist attractions and demonstrate that event planners should consider such aspects as parking, traffic, staff, volunteers, food and beverage availability, and location of the attraction to increase visitor satisfaction, which may fuel the desire to return or recommend the attraction. Although time and attention should be devoted to the elements composing the core of the attraction—the players and locations to watch play, in the case of a golf tournament—other elements deserve careful planning and consideration, as well.

References

- Costa, G., Glinia, E., Goudas, M., & Antoniou, P. (2004). Recreational services in resort hotels: Customer satisfaction aspects. *Journal of Sport Tourism, 9*, 117-126.
- Falk, J. H., & Dierking, L. D. (1992). *The museum experience*. Howells House, Washington, DC.
- Lee, B., Shafer, S., & Kang, I. (2005). Examining relationships among perceptions of self, episode-specific evaluations, and overall satisfaction with a leisure activity. *Leisure Sciences, 27*, 93-109.
- Musa, G. (2002). Sipadan: A SCUBA-diving paradise: An analysis of tourism impact, diver satisfaction and tourism management. *Tourism Geographies, 4*, 195-209.
- Tian-Cole, S. & Crompton, J. L. (2003). A conceptualization of the relationships between service quality and visitor satisfaction, and their links to destination selection. *Leisure Studies, 22*, 65-80.

Anthony W. Dixon

BS Finance University of North Carolina at Wilmington (1999)

MBA East Carolina University (2002)

Doctoral Student

Marian H. Wooten

BA History, BA EnglishClemson University (1999)

MA Art History Florida State University (2002)

Doctoral Candidate