

Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index for Golf courses in Chonburi Province, Thailand

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Abstract

In Thailand, there is no official standard to measure the golf tourist satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to develop a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand.

A strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index represents a uniform tool for evaluating, comparing, and measuring golf tourist satisfaction for the golf courses.

This study utilized a convenience sampling method to collect data in six golf courses of Chonburi province, Thailand. Questionnaires were given to each golf tourist at the reception area of the golf course. Each of six golf courses was allotted 200 questionnaires, which were distributed by field workers. From the 1,200 questionnaires distributed, 352 were usable. Golf tourists included 67% male and 33% female.

This study used Structural Equation Modeling to test the hypotheses and relationships among variables in the proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index.

Statements of golf tourists who responded to open-ended questions during the pilot study helped to clarify the meaning of items included in the structured questionnaire.

The results indicated that a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index provided a uniform means of assessing the golf tourist satisfaction for the golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand. For golf course owners and managers, this strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index could be a useful tool for evaluating golf tourist satisfaction and

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would provide a significant complement to conventional measurements of golf tourist satisfaction.

The results of the interrelationships among service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction were 1) Service quality (reliability and assurance) had a direct and positive effect on the image of golf courses in Thailand. 2) Service quality (reliability) had a direct and positive effect on perceived value and service quality (assurance) had no effect on perceived value. 3) Golf course image had a direct and negative effect on perceived value of golf tourism in Thailand. 4) Golf course image had a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction. And 5) Perceived value had a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

Keywords: Golf tourist satisfaction, Strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index, Golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand

Introduction

Thailand Incentive Convention Association or TICA (2017) has given information of golf tourism in Thailand that there are approximately 250 golf courses in Thailand and thousands of tourists fly into Thailand every year just for the golfing opportunities offered in the country. Destination diversity and the choice of golf courses throughout the country are key factors attracting the large numbers of visitors coming to play golf in Thailand where the most popular destination for golfing in Thailand especially for tourists is Chonburi Province (Wikipedia, 2018). There are over 20 courses in Chonburi province and all 20 are within a 45 minute drive from the popular tourist spot of Pattaya and hence why Pattaya was named Asia's best golfing destination of 2012. Other notable courses include Laem Chanbang International which was designed by the great Jack Nicklaus and Bangpra International known locally as the monkey course. Chonburi province has some of the most renowned golf courses in the whole of Thailand, namely Siam Country Club Old Course where hosting to the Honda LPGA events for the last 5 years and Amata Spring Country Club where hosting to the PGA tournaments and Thailand Golf Championship (Birdie Thailand, 2018).

The recent applauses given to the country has been an award by the World Golf Travel Agents Association or WGTAA to Thailand as the best up and coming destination for golf vacations. And Thailand Best Golf Destination in Asia Pacific (First Runner Up) from the event



of 13th Asia Pacific Golf Summit 2019 in India (Thai News Agency, 2019).

Further strengthening the country's reputation as a golfing hub is the hosting of a number of world class tournaments which have attracted leading players such as Tiger Woods, Ernie Els and Colin Montgomerie.

The information from TAT during the event of Thailand Golf Travel Mart 2019 stated that Thailand is among the top destinations in Asia for golf with number about 700,000 golf tourists coming to Thailand each year which generated 3.3 billion baht in revenue for Thailand tourism industry in 2018 (TAT News, 2019).

Overwhelming golf tourist demand for golf products and services has become increasingly evident in recent years. The golf tourism industry in Thailand has been considered to be one of the main approaches to influencing market position strategy in an extremely competitive tourism market and for golf businesses to distinguish themselves. Therefore, in the academics, they have begun to pay more attention to golf tourist satisfaction and golf tourist loyalty in the golf tourism industry.

Golf tourist satisfaction has been viewed as an important issue for the golf tourism industry because of its impact on repeat business and word of mouth reputation. In reality, the golf tourism industry in Thailand has not always responded satisfactory to the golf tourists' demands for improvement. In Thailand, each golf course has its own criteria to evaluate the level of golf tourist satisfaction. There is no official standard to measure golf tourist satisfaction across golf courses in Thailand. Hence, the golf tourism industry in Thailand is in need of a suitable strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index. If golf courses objectively measure golf tourist satisfaction using the official standard index, they can improve the items which golf tourists care about as well as optimize resource distribution throughout the golf tourism industry.

Research Questions

1. What is the strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand?
2. What are the interrelationships among service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction in the strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand?



Research Objectives

1. To develop a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand by applying the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model, the Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer (NCSB) model and the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) model.

2. To propose and analyze the interrelationships among variables of service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction in a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index.

Literature Review

Development of golf tourism industry

Tourists have variety of reasons in traveling to a destination, may be the impulse from internal or external factors or their nature. There are many authors define “sports tourism” in many aspects, such as, Standeven and DeKnop (1999) define as “active and passive forms of involving in sport activities which needed to travel away from home”, Weed and Bull (2004) define as “sports tourism has derived from a unique inside of people which is the collaboration of activity, people, and place”. It is comply with the tourism demand models which the other attractions are also factors in repeat visitation decision (Costa, & Manente, 1995). The sport tourism itself is a niche market, in year 2001, the economies of sports was growing four times faster than the rest of the United States’ economy (Blundell, 2003). And the number of people whose spending time on their vacation on sports activities has increased continuously.

Golfing is sport and growing activity for the golfers around the world. If the country can promote it as a tourism product properly, it can become a very profitable tourism product because it is a niche market that has the highest money spending rate per tourist. It can generate substantial revenues for the tourism industry and the country. It can provide a tremendous boost and become a very successful for the tourism destination (Hinch, & Higham, 2001).



Golf market is like many niche tourism products that can play an important role in positioning a destination. The main of the literature that considers golfers equivalent to tourists is focused on satisfaction and value (Petrick, Backman, Bixler, & Norman, 2001; Petrick, & Backman, 2002). Intentions to visit a destination of the golfers are also take part into a destination's brand which is the perceived in the tourist memory (Cai, 2002).

The results from the research on understanding golfing visitors to a destination by Hennessey, Macdonald and Maceachern (2008) stated that “the value and satisfaction with the golf courses played were high and consistent across the three golf categories of frequency of golf played was infrequent, moderate, and dedicated but there is no indication that this result would hold for other golf destinations, so this would be an interesting way to extend the research to other golf destinations. Do feelings of value and satisfaction vary across the three golf categories at other golf destinations? If so, that would be very useful for designing a satisfaction strategy for other golf destinations”. In developing strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand in this study will be valued to the golf tourism industry in Thailand.

Service quality, corporate image, perceived value, and customer satisfaction in tourism industry

Exploration customer satisfaction as a form of consumer purchasing behavior is corresponding with a framework for understanding customers' wants and needs. The framework of customer satisfaction includes important components that must be described as a basis for this study. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996) indicated that five attributes including physical environment, contact personnel, quality of service, corporate identity, and accessibility determine corporate image.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) indicated that service quality is the difference between consumer expectations of service and perceived service. Rust, Zahorik and Keiningham (1995) demonstrated that customer satisfaction indices offer possibilities to value the profitability of various satisfaction attempts. Therefore, the potential relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction may be expected.

The measurement of customer satisfaction may be an important forecasting of consumer purchasing behavior. In general, this study will illustrate a framework of golf tourist satisfaction that describes the relationships among golf course image, service quality, and



perceived value.

Service quality considers the movement across the gap between customer perceptions and customer expectations. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) have defined service quality as a kind of attitude, the degree of difference between the expectation of service and actual perception. And used of factor analysis to deduct five dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibility, responsiveness, and empathy.

Quality is a consumer's judgment about a product's or service's overall excellence or superiority (Petrick, 2004). Fick and Ritchie (1991) studies perceived service quality in airlines, hotels, restaurants, and ski sectors, demonstrated the usefulness of the SERVQUAL instrument to indicate the relative importance of expectations in affecting customer satisfaction.

Development of customer satisfaction index model

1) Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB) Model

Created in 1989, the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB) model was the first national customer satisfaction index for domestically purchased and consumed products and services (Fornell, 1992). The original SCSB model shown in Figure 2.1 contains two primary antecedents of satisfaction. The first was the perceptions of a customer's performance experience with a product or service and the second was the customer expectations regarding that performance. Perceived performance is equivalent to perceived value (Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001, p. 221).

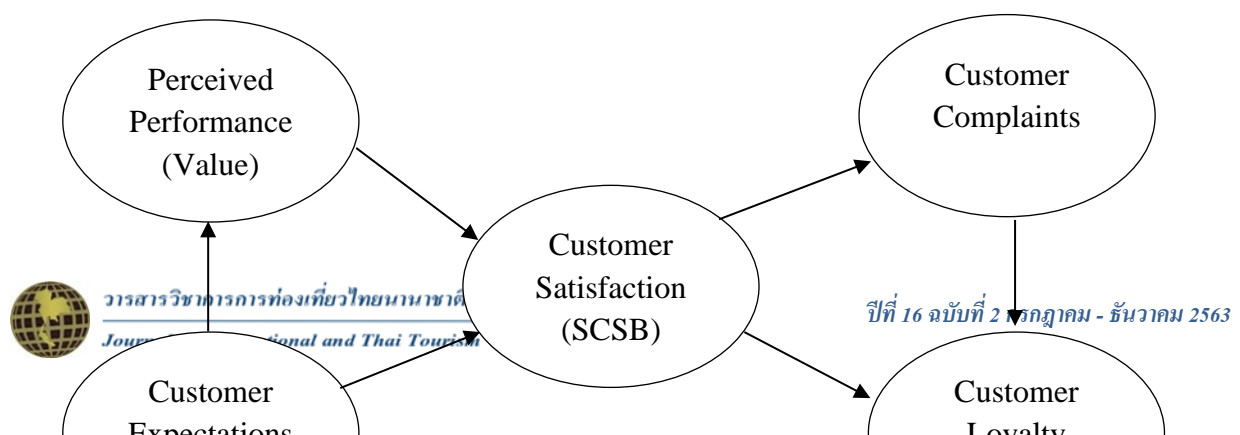


Figure 2.1 Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB) Model

Source: Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001, p. 221

2) American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Model

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Model was developed in 1994 and builds upon the original SCSB model. The ACSI model represents a customer based measurement system (see Figure 2.2) for evaluating and enhancing the performance of firms, industry, economic sectors, and national economies (Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001, p. 222). The ACSI model measures the quality of the goods and services as experiences by the customers that consume them.

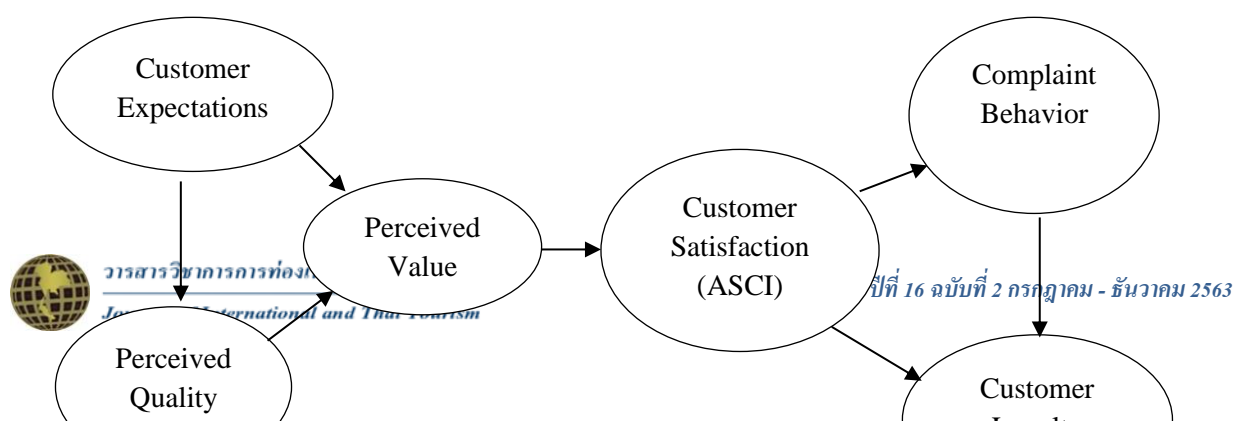


Figure 2.2 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Model

Source: Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001, p. 222

3) Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer (NCSB) Model

The NCSB model was identical to the original ACSI model with the exception that it included corporate image and its relationships to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Fornell, et al, 1996).

The NCSB model is different from the ACSI model because of three important reasons (Yang, Tian, & Zhang, 2000). First, the NCSB model uses the introduction of SERVQUAL to measure service quality. Second, the NCSB model focuses on the introduction of corporate reputation. Finally, the NCSB model replaces customer complaints with complaint handling.

4) European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) Model

The European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) model (See Figure 2.3) differs from the ACSI model (Eklof, 2000) in several ways. The ECSI model is an indicator that measures customer satisfaction. It is an adaptation of the SCSB model (Fornell, 1992) and is accordant to the ACSI model (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996).

Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Levik and Cha (2001, p. 225) demonstrated that there are two differences between the ACSI and ECSI models. First, the ECSI model does not include the incidence of complaint behavior as a consequence of satisfaction. Second, according to the original NCSB model, the ECSI model consolidates corporate image as a latent variable in the model. Corporate image is determined to have direct effects on customer expectation, satisfaction, and loyalty.



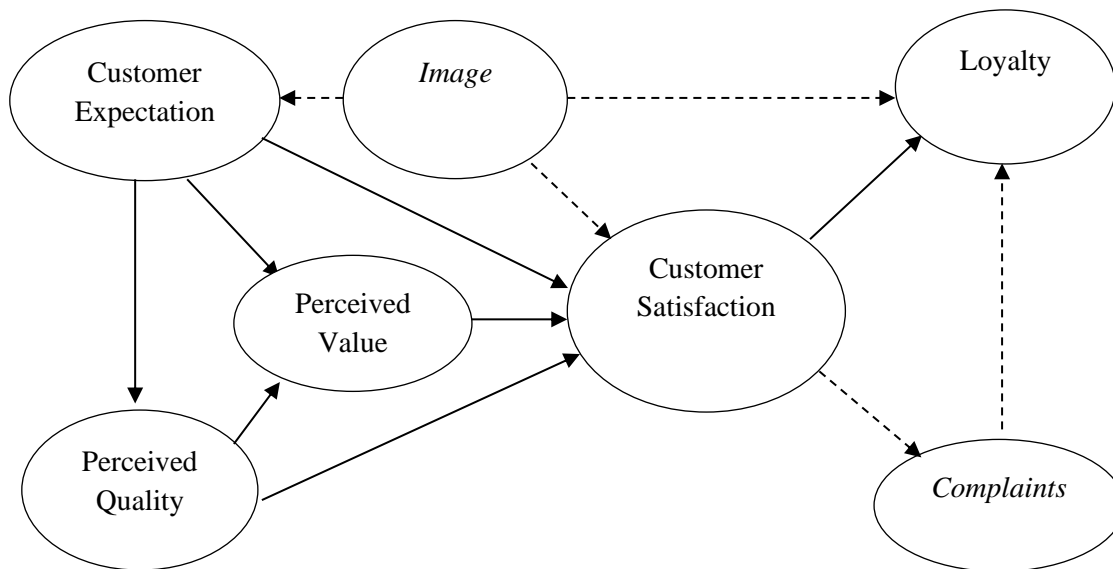


Figure 2.3 European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) Model

Source: Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001, p. 225

Relationship among service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction

Influence of image on perceived value and golfer satisfaction

Kristensen, Martensen and Gronholdt (1999) provided a model suggesting that image may have a direct effect on value. However, from the results of O’Loughlin, & Coenders’s (2002), the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) survey which used a structural equation model, demonstrated that image did not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

In the research of the corporate image, Lee (2003) indicated that organizations should set standards that help to create a positive image with five factors including physical environment, contact personnel, quality of service, corporate identity and accessibility, to have a positive impact on repeat business. Therefore, three hypotheses, which include golf course image as a variable, are proposed in this study as following:

Hypothesis 1: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golf course image.



Hypothesis 2: Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on perceived value.

Hypothesis 3: Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

Influence of service quality on perceived value and golfer satisfaction

Quality has been shown to be a preceding of perceived value (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002). Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha and Bryant (1996) demonstrated that perceived quality has a positive relatedness between perceived value and customer satisfaction based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model. Value is positively affected by perceived quality (Anderson, & Sullivan, 1993; Fornell, 1992).

Service quality has become an important topic because of its explicit relationship to customer satisfaction (Bolton, & Drew, 1991). Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant (1996) illustrated that perceived quality and perceived value in the ACSI model provides important indicative information. Both perceived quality and perceived value are expected to have a direct and positive effect on overall customer satisfaction (O'Loughlin, & Coenders, 2002). The European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) model includes the foundation that service quality is a foremost affecting perceived value and is expected to have a direct and positive effect on overall customer satisfaction (Kristensen, Martensen, & Gronholdt, 2000). Two hypotheses related to service quality have been established for this study as following:

Hypothesis 4: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on perceived value.

Hypothesis 5: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

Influences of perceived value on golfer satisfaction

Howard and Sheth (1969) have demonstrated that customer satisfaction is dependent on value and perceived value is the perceived level of product or service quality relative to the price paid. Previous research has demonstrated that the measurement of consumer satisfaction should be used in association with the measurement of perceived value (Oh, 2000; Woodruff, 1997). Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha and Bryant (1996) found that price perceptions affect customer satisfaction. Their study indirectly used a ratio of value and equality perceptions rather than a direct measure of price perceptions. Value is expected to



have a direct impact on customer satisfaction (Anderson, & Sullivan, 1993; Fornell, 1992). Therefore, this study will test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Perceived value has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

Development of proposed golf tourist satisfaction index model

The proposed golf tourist satisfaction index model in this study was developed based on the relevant literatures review of customer satisfaction index model of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model, Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer (NCSB) model, and the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) model as described in details as following:

Yang, Tian and Zhang (2000) demonstrated that when a country attempts to set up a customer satisfaction index model, it can take advantage of other countries' customer satisfaction index models and modify them to fit. Therefore, this study is attempting to develop a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand, which will use the American Customer Satisfaction Index model, Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer model, and the European Customer Satisfaction Index model as the foundation for the golf tourist satisfaction index model and modify some variables based on the literatures review.

First, the proposed strategic model eliminates customer expectation from the American Customer Satisfaction Index model and replaces expectation with corporate image.

Second, in the Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer model (Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, & Cha, 2001) the SERVQUAL instrument was introduced to evaluate quality. Therefore, this study was replaced perceived quality with service quality in the proposed model.

Third, Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Levik and Cha (2001) stated that the European Customer Satisfaction Index model does not include complaint behavior because of the optional latent variables. Yang, Tian and Zhang (2000) found that most respondents rarely complained even if they were unsatisfied with products or services, which results in large amounts of missing data on complaints. Therefore, this study has decided to eliminate the complaint variable in the present study. The complaint variable would be recommended for the future study.

Fourth, there is an extended relation between customer satisfaction and customer



loyalty in the American Customer Satisfaction Index model (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996). However, McAlexander, Kim and Robert (2003) demonstrated that loyalty is developed in various ways that are more dynamic and complex than reflected in customer satisfaction surveys, and after a first satisfying experience, a customer requires some kind of reinforcement to become loyal. Therefore, this study has eliminated the loyalty variable in the present study. The loyalty variable would be recommended for the future study.

The proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index linked service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction as an integrated model, which described the final outputs of golfer satisfaction in terms of the interrelationships among service quality, golf course image, and perceived value which service quality refers to the tangible facilities and intangible services in relation to golfer satisfaction in a golf course. Golf course image refers to golfer perception and experience at the golf course. Perceived value is based on golfer's value, which is generated from the product or service itself and individual experiences in the evaluation of a golf course. Golfer satisfaction is an emotional presentation of the results of the comparison of a golfer's expectation and perception.

Methodology

The Proposed Strategic Model of Golf tourist Satisfaction Index (See Figure 3.1) linked service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction as an integrated model, which depicted the final outputs of golfer satisfaction in terms of the interrelationships among them.

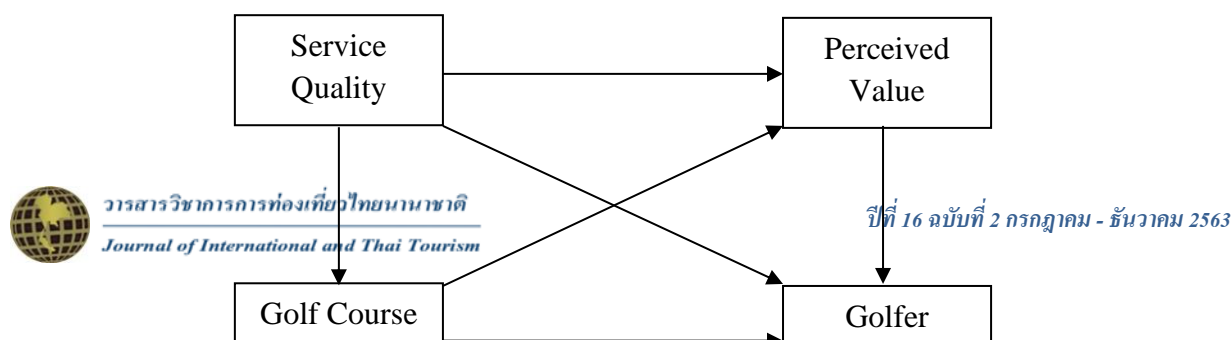


Figure 3.1 Proposed Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index

The hypotheses within the proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index are 1) Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golf course image, 2) Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on perceived value, 3) Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction, 4) Service quality has a direct and positive effect on perceived value, 5) Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction, and 6) Perceived value has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

Pilot study

The questions for the pilot study consisted of seven sections. The seven sections were 1) Information related to the golf course where the golf tourists played, 2) Perceived value, 3) Golfer satisfaction, 4) Golf course image, 5) Service quality, 6) Personal data, and 7) Space for any additional comments.

For the pilot study, a convenience sampling of the golf tourists who played golf in the “Siam Country Club” and “St. Andrew 2000” was used. The total number of questionnaires returned at the Siam Country Club was 100, those completed 56, and the valid number of questionnaires was 43. The total number of questionnaires returned at St. Andrew 2000 was 100, completed 47, and the valid number of questionnaires was 27. The total useful responses were 70, which accounted for a 43 percent response rate for the Siam Country Club and a 27 percent response rate for St. Andrew 2000.

Item analysis was conducted on the 35 items for evaluating each item regarding service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction to determine which items should be included on each measurement. The values of the critical ratio were considered as p values of 0.05 and 0.01 and / or all the correlations which greater than 0.30 were accepted (Green and Salkind, 2004). In terms of Green and Salkind’s (2004) suggestion, all question items in this study were retained and those retained items were developed for the final



questionnaire.

The reliability of the survey instrument to measure golfer satisfaction was measured by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) within factor analysis, using a minimum factor loading of 0.40 to screen out unreliable variables and to evaluate the reliability of the variables. The factor loadings were between 0.488 and 0.870. The reliability of the golfer satisfaction index scale achieved a satisfactory level in the pilot study.

This study used the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program to implement the Reliability Analysis. The purpose of the Reliability Analysis is to estimate a measure's reliability in yielding compatible scores. The coefficient alpha evaluates corresponding in scores among equivalent items. Cronbach's Alpha (α) is one of the diagnostic measures to evaluate internal consistency. Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) identified that reliabilities of 0.70 or higher are sufficient.

All of the variables exceeded the 0.70 level for coefficient alpha, between 0.721 to 0.939, which signified that the scales had a high degree of internal reliability. Based on the factor loadings and coefficient alpha from the pilot study, all question items remained and were included in the final questionnaire for this study.

A closed-ended questionnaire was designed to be self-administered. The survey instrument consisted of six major sections. 1) The first section examined information related to golf tourists who played golf in Thailand 2) Section two referred to perceived value 3) The third section focused on golfer satisfaction 4) Section four referred to golf course image 5) Section five focused on service quality 6) Section six examined golfers' personal data.

The population for this study was the golf tourists who came to play golf in Chonburi province, Thailand where there are approximately 20 golf courses. A convenience sampling of the golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand was used for this study. Laem Chabang International Country Club, Burapha Golf Club, Chee Chan Golf Resort, Phoenix Gold Golf and Country Club, Khao Kheow Country Club, and Pattavia Century Golf Club were selected for this study. The target sample of this study was the golf tourists who played golf in these six golf courses. Questionnaires were given to each golf tourist at the close of the process of payment. The field workers stood in front of the reception area to invite golf tourists who played golf to participate in this survey. Each of the six golf courses was allotted 200 questionnaires, the total number of questionnaires distributed was 1200. The number returned was 381, incomplete 29, a total of 425 refused the questionnaire when offered (non-response



rate of 35 percent), therefore, the valid number of questionnaires was 352.

This study used a Structural Equation Modeling with the Analysis of Model Structures to test hypotheses and the relationships among variables in the proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to test the hypotheses for the significant differences among variables.

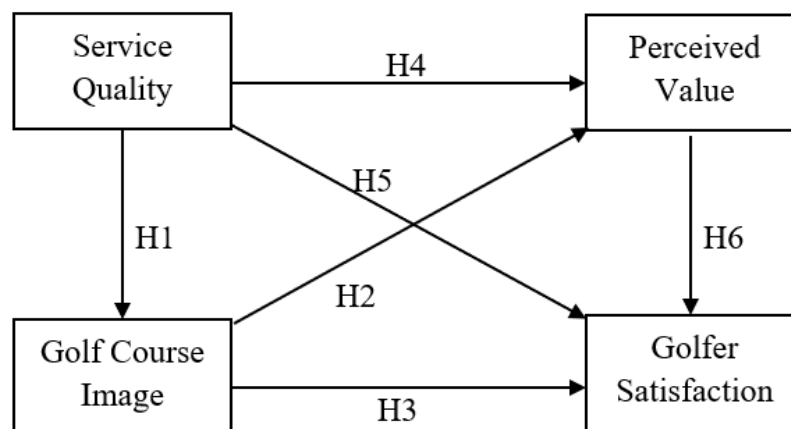


Figure 3.2 Hypothesized Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index

Hypotheses in the Proposed Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index

H1: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golf course image.

All items in service quality and golf course image were used to measure H1.

H2: Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on perceived value.

All items in golf course image and perceived value were used to measure H2.

H3: Golf course image has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

All items in golf course image and golfer satisfaction were used to measure H3.

H4: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on perceived value.

All items in service quality and perceived value were used to measure H4.

H5: Service quality has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

All items in service quality and golfer satisfaction were used to measure H5.

H6: Perceived value has a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction.

All items in perceived value and golfer satisfaction were used to measure H6.



For the quality of constructs, this study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software as the first stage of statistical analysis. SEM is a statistical technique with the ability to deal with multiple constructs and scales. SEM starts with the hypotheses explicated in the form of a structural equation model, operates them with a measurement instrument, and evaluates model fit, which means to determine how well the model as a whole explains the data (Kline, 2005).

Before developing meaningful variables for a goodness of fit test by using structural equation modeling (SEM), the data from the 35 items Likert scale had to be tested. Five statistical methods, including data screening, factor analysis, composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were used.

Findings and Discussion

According to the results of SEM, two of the items in service quality were found to be less than ideal in the measurement of the construct. In the meantime, for the goodness of fit for the proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index, the service quality need to be divided into two constructs which were reliability and assurance, which were renamed in terms of categories used in the five dimensions of SERVQUAL scale.

The reliability construct was described as the definition of SERVQUAL in this study. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) defined that reliability is the activity to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

According to the results of scale qualification, a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index has illustrated to replace the originally proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index. This study used the second stage of statistical analysis running Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the quality of each set of question items in the final questionnaire. SEM was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses described in Figure 4.1. The recommended ratio of Chi-square to degrees of freedom is less than 2 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). This study presented that the Chi-square to



degrees of freedom ratio equal to 0.000 was less than 2. The root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) equal to 0.31 and the value of RMSEA should be less than the recommended value, 0.05 (Kelloway, 1998), indicating a good fit. In this model of golf tourist satisfaction index, the value of RMSEA was not a good to fair fit. The overall fit indices for the modified structural model were the comparative fit index (CFI) was at 1.00, the normal fit index (NFI) was at 1.00, and the incremental fit index (IFI) was at 1.00, were all greater than the cutoff point of 0.90 (Kelloway, 1998), indicating an adequate fit for the measurement model. Therefore, a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index was considered to be the preferred model.

The author illustrated a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index to replace the originally proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index. A modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index reported (see Figure 4.1). This adjustment for a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index was recommended.

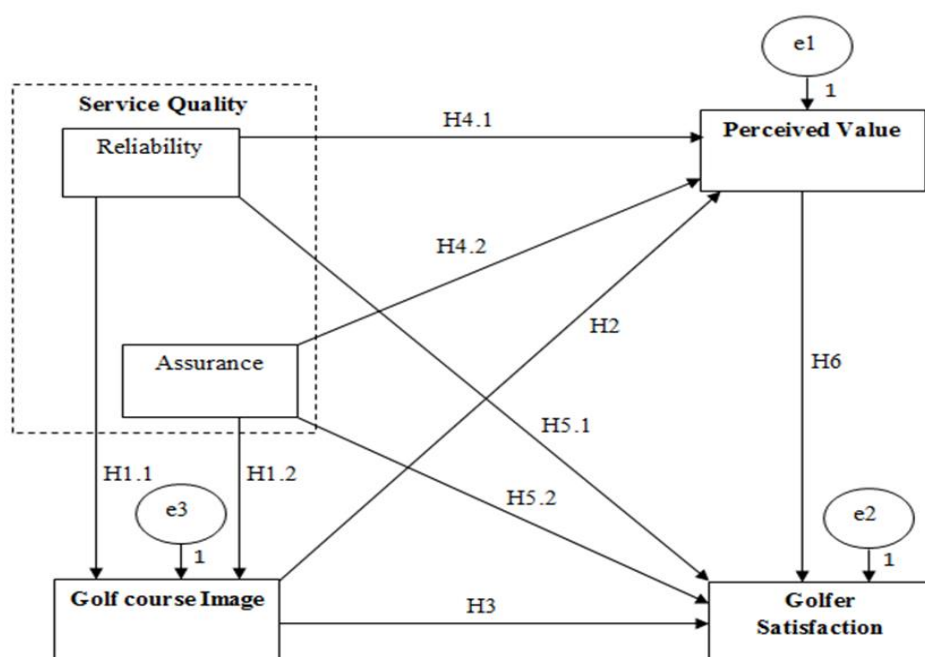


Figure 4.1 A Modified Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index

The modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index showed the simple and absolute relationships among constructs in this study. A modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index assumed that nine hypotheses presented positive relationships. However, five hypotheses were positive and one hypothesis was negative based on this study reported. The adjustment for a modified model of golf tourist satisfaction index was recommended.



There were nine hypothesized relationships presented and six were supported while three hypotheses were not supported (see Figure 4.2).

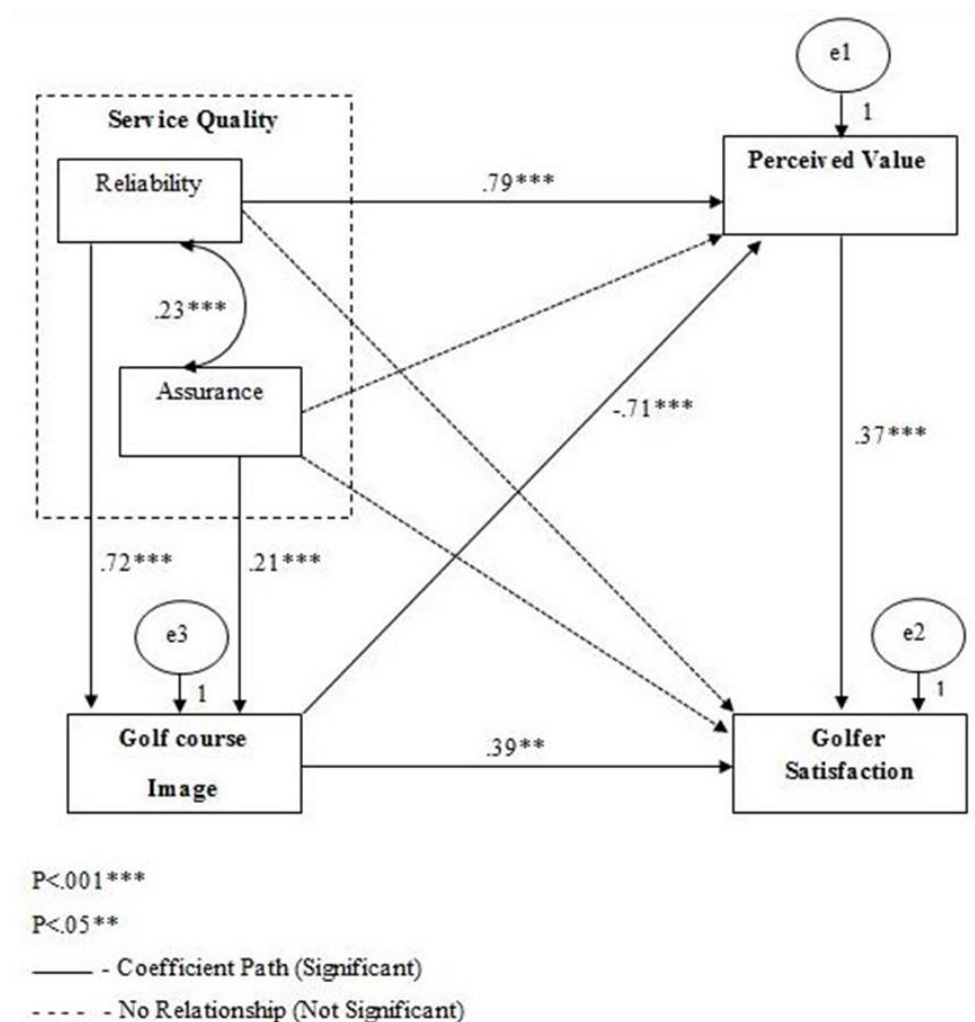


Figure 4.2 Outcomes of a Modified Strategic Model of Golfer Satisfaction Index

H1.1: Service quality (reliability) positively influences golf course image.

H1.2: Service quality (assurance) positively influences golf course image.

H2: Golf course image negatively influences perceived value.



H3: Golf course image positively influences golfer satisfaction.

H4.1: Service quality (reliability) positively influences perceived value.

H4.2: Service quality (assurance) positively influences perceived value, was not supported.

H5.1 Service quality (reliability) positively influences golfer satisfaction, was not supported.

H5.2: Service quality (assurance) positively influences golfer satisfaction, was not supported.

H6: Perceived value positively influences golfer satisfaction.

The findings of the interrelationships among service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction in a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index are as follow:

1) Positive Effect between Service Quality (Reliability and Assurance) and Golf course Image

The findings showed that service quality (reliability and assurance) had a direct and positive effect on the image of golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand. This result was consistent with the finding of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996), who demonstrated that quality of service determined organization image.

2) Positive Effect between Service Quality (Reliability) and Perceived value

Service quality (reliability) had a direct and positive effect on perceived value. Service quality (assurance) had no effect on perceived value in this study. Humer, Herrmann, and Morgan (2001) supported the relationship between service quality and perceived value based on their explanation of the impact of value increase relative to quality.

3) Negative Effect between Golf course Image and Perceived Value



The findings showed that golf course image had a direct and negative effect on perceived value of golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand. This result was not supported by Johnson, Gustafsson, Lervik, and Cha (2001). According to the findings of Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik and Cha (2001), corporate image is a latent variable in the European Customer Satisfaction Index Model. However, golf course image had no effect on perceived value from the result reported in this study. The negative relationship between golf course image and perceived value was a surprising finding for this study.

4) Positive Effect between Golf course Image and Golfer Satisfaction

The findings showed that golf course image had a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction. This finding was supported by Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik and Cha (2001), who concluded that corporate image has a direct effect on customer satisfaction in the European Customer Satisfaction Index Model.

5) Positive Effect between Perceived Value and Golfer Satisfaction

The results of this study showed that perceived value had a direct and positive effect on golfer satisfaction. The results was supported by Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, and Bryant (1996), who revealed that price perceptions affect customer satisfaction, and supported by Fornell (1992) who concluded that value is expected to have a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to develop a strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand. The results of SEM showed that a modified strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index was a suitable strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand which has an adjustment according to the findings as shown in Figure 5.1



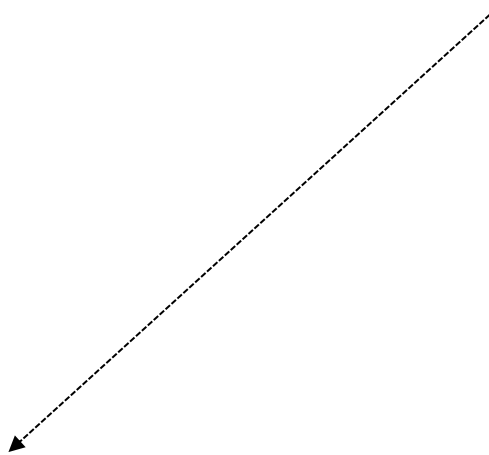


Figure 5.1 Strategic Model of Golf Tourist Satisfaction Index

The managerial implications are based on the strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index and instrument that were developed for this study using structural equation modeling.

For golf course owners and managers, the strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index and survey instrument used for this study have the potential to be a useful tool for evaluating golf tourist satisfaction and provides a significant complement to conventional measurements of the golf tourist satisfaction.

From the findings revealed that service quality (reliability and assurance) had a positive effect on the image of golf courses in Thailand. Caddies service' attitude is the critical factor for improving the golf course image. Caddies' on the job training, especially focusing on the delivery of promised service and courtesy to the golf tourists is needed because service has an intangible quality, golf course managers should build an open organizational culture to encourage caddies to share their knowledgeable regarding service skills and to help to avoid the golf tourist complaints.

Moreover, golf course managers should find the opportunity to offer a variety of caddies' training programs. Caddies' ability to serve golf tourists in a professional and appropriate manner can be enhanced. One of the characteristics for caddies' training programs in the golf course is the apprenticeship, especially for the training of new caddies. New caddies serve their apprenticeship with the senior caddies. The senior caddies can help new caddies



learn service skills including service attitudes. They can also encourage new caddies to acquire relevant certificates such as language certificate. Internal service related competitions could be held quarterly. Promotions are the reward.

Additionally, golf course managers should create or transcript the details of all services provided by the golf course using the standard operating procedure or SOPs system. New or part time caddies should have an orientation to understand their job descriptions and to learn the SOPs of the job. Although standard operating procedures have been used by several hospitality industries but the contents of the SOPs are brief and not specific enough. The applicable of SOPs gives the golf course a competitive advantage. However, only a few golf courses use SOPs because it is time consuming and can be costly initially. If golf courses in Thailand require their caddies to accurately follow the SOPs for the standardization of service quality, golf tourists will receive dependable and accurate service from the caddies who could have well-mannered attitudes.

From the service quality (reliability) had a positive effect on perceived value. The customization is recommended for the managerial implication. Customization is also trend for the golf tourism industry. Golf course managers might choose to set up a systematic customer history tracking for tracking golf tourists' consuming behaviors. Golf course managers could provide the service of a hostess to ensure that golf course' caddies deliver dependable and accurate services to golf tourist which leads to customer loyalty. Although customization provides a competitive advantage but it requires many resources to support, so golf course managers have to evaluate the feasibility of customization. If the resources of the golf courses can support customization, the golf course will gain a positive reputation and golf tourists will be willing to pay more. If the golf courses fail to meet golf tourists' needs as promised in advance, golf courses will lose customer trust and reliability will suffer. Golf tourists can pay more money to the golf courses for the promised service.

The negative relationship between golf course image and perceived value demonstrated that golf tourists believed that golf courses did not reach a standard compare to the price they pay. First, golf tourists believed that golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand were the world standard golf courses and will provide outstanding service and facilities. However, when golf tourists played golf in Chonburi province, Thailand, they often feel disappointed in the service and facilities provided.

Golf course managers are advised to pay attention to the consistency between Thai'



golf courses rating system and the world golf courses rating system. Golf course managers may refer to the standards for facilities based on the world rating system to remodel the design and facilities in order to improve golf tourists' impression. Golf course managers might also invite experts as a mystery shopper to evaluate the services and facilities of the golf courses. Furthermore, golf course management should act on recommendations made in order to reach excellent service quality. Golf course managers can help to reduce the gap between Thai' golf courses rating system and the world golf courses rating system through the improvement of services and facilities.

Golf course image had a positive effect on golfer satisfaction. Golf course image is the overall impression made in the minds of the public about golf courses, including the impressions of the architecture, services, and food. For example, the Phoenix Gold Golf and Country Club emphasizes its unique and temple styled architecture to attract golf tourists. When golf tourists enter to a golf course, golf course caddies greet them with a smile and Sawasdee. The Thai Sawasdee action shows the sincere warmth of the welcome. Club house restaurant has been viewed as an important attribute for attracting golf tourists. Golf course managers may emphasize the delicious cuisine created by famous chefs who work in their golf courses in order to have a positive impact on the image of the golf course.

Perceived value had a positive effect on golfer satisfaction. Golf tourists can pay more for better services and facilities and got a high level of golfer satisfaction in this study. Moreover, golf tourists thought that they made the right decisions when they chose to played golf in Thailand and their experiences were enjoyable. Therefore, golf tourists may be willing to pay more because they believed that the cost is worth for the excellent service. The golf courses may increase profit through making an adjustment in pricing after they have improved its services and facilities accordingly.

Recommendations for Future Research

From the literatures review can see that the customer satisfaction index models have been used in many countries, such as, the United States and many countries in Europe. A foundation for the preliminary research has been provided in this study. There are many constructs of the customer satisfaction index models, such as, customer expectations,



perceived value, service quality, customer satisfaction, complaint behavior, and customer loyalty. In this study has been focused on four constructs of service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction, to measure the golfer satisfaction on the golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand. However, adding or discovering other potential constructs, such as, customer-oriented, employment, environmental, organizational or cultural issues for the golf tourism industry in Thailand is recommended. Multiple indices in the golf tourist satisfaction model may increase the level of accuracy by considering differences across constructs for the evaluation of industry performance.

The indices of the proposed strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction for golf courses in Chonburi province, Thailand may be used as one instrument or to measure individual constructs of service quality, golf course image, perceived value, and golfer satisfaction. This study has experienced that the golf tourists took over 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire survey when they are departing the golf course and may be on a strict time schedule. Other methods of data collection could be considered such as distributing the questionnaires survey upon arrival with directions for submission to a location that will assure the returned of the questionnaires.

A golf course may choose to compare areas of its business both directly and over time. The strategic model of golf tourist satisfaction index may be viewed as an internal evaluation procedure or tool to evaluate golf course performance. The indices are a series of evaluation indicators. It may be possible to compare the individual such as caddies, divisions, and golf courses by using of this instrument.

Information about additional independent variables may be of value to golf tourism industry. This study could be replicated and the sample of golf courses could be expanded. Qualitative methodologies such as case studies, observations, in depth interviews and focus groups might be used to build upon this preliminary research effort.

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