

A CROSS NATIONAL STUDY OF GOLF TOURISTS' SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was two-fold: firstly, it was to examine the determinants satisfaction levels of golf tourists and secondly to investigate if these vary across golf tourists' country of residence. Using data collected through a survey of golf tourists visiting Lisbon (Portugal), attributes directly related to playing golf as well as more generic destination attributes were examined as potential determinants of golf tourists' satisfaction. The data was analysed in two stages by the means of logistic regression. In stage one, the analysis was based on a representative sample of golf tourists to the region. In the second stage, two separate analyses were undertaken, one examining the satisfaction of Nordic golf tourists and another of British golf tourists (the two main markets for Lisbon). The results indicate that the satisfaction level of golf tourists is influenced by several factors, including those related to perceived quality and value. In addition, the results suggest that satisfaction is influenced by cross-cultural differences. While some determinants were important influences for both the British and the Nordic golfers, other determinants were specific to each country of origin.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Golf tourism, Quality, Value, Logistic regression, Cross-cultural studies, Lisbon.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to hold a strong competitive position, destinations are required to hold a balanced product portfolio. This involves developing existing products so that weaknesses are overcome, as well as developing new products so as to explore internal strengths and market opportunities. This might involve adopting a diversification strategy, which focuses on new products for new markets. Diversification strategies are usually associated with attempting to attract high value-added tourists in markets that are expected to grow

(Schmallegger, Taylor, & Carson, 2011; Boukas & Ziakas, 2012). Golf tourism has been identified as one such market by many destinations because the golf tourist tends to earn higher levels of income when compared to more established tourist segments, which leads to a higher average spending (MINTEL, 2006). In addition, golf tourism has been regarded as a means of reducing tourism seasonality, notably in destinations which are traditionally dependent on sun & sea tourism (Garau-Vadell & Borja-Solé, 2008; Boukas & Ziakas, 2012).

Portugal is an example of one country where golf tourism has achieved an important status. It is considered as a priority tourism product (Portuguese Tourism Board, 2007). According to the Portuguese government, in 2006 the average spending per day of a golf tourist was approximately 260€ (Portuguese Tourism Board, 2007). A more recent study by the Lisbon Tourism Board concluded that golf tourists spent the largest amounts of money among all tourists visiting the Lisbon region (Netconsumo.com, 2011). At the same time, golf tourism has made a very important contribution to reduce the seasonality of destinations like the Lisbon Coast. If the city of Lisbon is removed from the analysis, the remainder of the Lisbon Coast is prone to seasonality since it relies more on the leisure market than on the business market (Lisbon Tourism Board, 2010). As the demand of golf tourism tends to be spread around the year, it provides these destinations with a reliable and attractive segment which fulfills vacant capacity in the low season periods.

With 24 golf courses, accounting for 32% of golf courses in the country (Portuguese Golf Federation, n.d), the Lisbon region has embraced golf as a strategic tourism product. Although the region maintains a steady growth in the number of rounds since the early 2000s, the occupancy rate of golf courses is lower than 40%, which indicates a substantial spare capacity of 60% (Lisbon Tourism Board, n/d). The growth in the number of golf courses over the years has not been accompanied by a growth in demand, with the average price per round decreasing since 2004 (Lisbon Tourism Board, n/d). Destinations whose growth has stalled despite substantial spare capacity face the challenge of increasing demand, either through a higher number of rounds and/or the average price per round. This can be achieved through longer stays, greater levels of re-visitation or new demand. Past research suggests high levels of satisfaction are a critical factor in influencing these outcomes (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Therefore, monitoring tourist satisfaction is an important step in implementing strategies aimed at improving the performance of tourist destinations through attempting to influence the levels of tourist satisfaction. This involves not only understanding golf tourists' level of satisfaction, but also those factors that contribute to their satisfaction. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the determinants of golf tourist satisfaction, with a focus on tourists visiting the Lisbon region.

Enhancing our understanding of golf tourists' satisfaction requires exploring approaches and methodologies not used in previous studies. In this article, logistic regression is posited to be a valuable, yet still largely unused, statistical tool for examining golf (and sport) tourists' satisfaction. A second area of enquiry developed in this paper refers to the extent to which country of origin influences golf tourists' satisfaction. Previous studies within the tourism literature have attempted to examine the influence of culture on satisfaction, but the results have been inconsistent. Given the value of such information to destination marketing and management (Kozak, 2001), it is imperative that cross-cultural differences in golf tourists' satisfaction are examined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Satisfaction, quality and value

Satisfaction is a major construct in the field of tourism research, with many papers devoted to this topic. This reflects the importance of satisfaction for the management of tourist services, whether whole destinations or specific tourism providers such as hotels, airlines and visitor attractions. Much of this research attempts to examine what influences satisfaction. The assumption behind this focus is that by understanding what determines satisfaction, tourism managers will be in a better position to implement appropriate marketing strategies and tactics that will maximise levels of tourist satisfaction (Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001). The importance of studying satisfaction is enhanced once its consequences are recognised. Not only the level of satisfaction has been shown to be related to intention to return, but it is also indication of word-of-mouth behaviours (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). In a context where social media provides a platform for word-of-mouth information to many future travellers (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Zehrer, Crotts, & Magnini, 2011), managing satisfaction should be a priority for any tourism manager.

Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as an evaluation of a consumption event or its constituent parts. The study of satisfaction involves addressing two important issues: how satisfaction judgments are formed and what is evaluated. The first involves understanding the mental heuristics (or processes) used by consumers when evaluating an experience. The disconfirmation of expectations posits that consumers develop fairly specific expectations about the performance of the service, which are then compared to the actual performance (Szymanski & Henard, 2001). From comparing these two elements, consumers become dissatisfied (when actual performance does not match expectations) or satisfied (when performance is better than expectations). Such relationships assume that consumers have positive expectations about the experience. The disconfirmation of expectations heuristic has been employed in several tourist satisfaction studies (e.g. Baker & Crompton, 2000; Akama & Kieti 2003). The performance heuristics emphasises the actual performance element at the expense of expectations (Tse & Wilton, 1988). This is reflected in the use of scales like 'terrible-delighted' (e.g. Kozak & Rimmington, 2000) and 'very poor-very good (or excellent)' (e.g. Crompton, 2003; Song, van der Veen, Li, & Chen, 2012). Other heuristics include equity (Oliver & Swan, 1989) and social equity (Szymanski & Henard, 2001), the former reflecting a comparison between tourist inputs (sacrifices) and outputs (benefits), and the latter concerns the tourist's perception of the input-output relationship vis-a-vis other tourists. Apart from notions of value for money (e.g. Williams & Soutar, 2009) and price-quality relationship (e.g. Song et al., 2012), equity-based heuristics have not gained much traction in tourist satisfaction research.

With regards to the second important area of satisfaction research – what is evaluated –, many determinants have been suggested in the tourism literature. Much of the literature focuses on the notion of value as the key influence on tourist satisfaction. For example, Lee, Petrick and Crompton (2007) focused on perceived functional value, overall value and emotional value, while Williams and Soutar (2009) added the dimensions of social and novelty value. A recent study (Bradley & Sparks, 2012) offered a longer list of value dimensions, to include elements such as rest and relaxation, financial value, quality value, convenience and status and esteem. Other studies specifically focused on service quality, usually through the Servqual dimensions (e.g. Akama & Kieti, 2003; Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009). Additional perspectives on the determinants of satisfaction include brand equity (Nam, Ekinci, & Whyatt, 2011), the push/pull theory (Prayag & Ryan, 2012) and Pine and Gilmore's 4 realms of experience (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). In this study, both value and service quality were assumed to determine golf tourists' satisfaction, hence both areas are reviewed next.

According to Baker and Crompton (2000) quality differs from satisfaction in that the former measures a provider's output (how well the provider performs), while the latter measures the tourist's outcome. Delivering high quality services is a critical success factor for tourism destinations and organisations alike, since consumers' perceptions of the quality they receive influences their satisfaction (Knutson, Stevens, & Patton, 1995). The tourism literature has also found convincing evidence for the positive relationship between perceptions of quality and satisfaction (e.g. Baker and Crompton, 2000). Quality is usually conceptualised from a disconfirmation of expectations perspective (Baker and Crompton, 2000). Much of the literature has focused on the dimensions of service quality. The servqual model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1990), with its 5 quality dimensions, is perhaps the most widely used model. In tourism it has been used in different settings such as hotels (Ladhari, 2009), low cost carriers (Kim & Lee, 2002), destinations (Chand, 2010) and sport tourism (Kouthouris & Alexandris, 2005). With some minor variations, the five dimensions have been found to be important determinants of tourist satisfaction (Ladhari, 2009).

The perceptions of value have also been recognised as an important influence on overall satisfaction judgements (Chen & Chen, 2010). Two major perspectives on value have been offered over time. Several authors (e.g. Holbrook, 1999; Woodall, 2003) define value as the benefit associated to the consumption of an object or experience. As Bradley and Sparks (2012) summed up, for these authors value is viewed as "something consumers prize over other things" (p. 191). A different perspective associates value to a comparison between what the consumer receives and what it gives (Zeithaml, 1988). Thus, a major difference between the two perspectives is that the latter emphasises the comparison between the benefits and the sacrifices (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, & Moliner, 2006), while the former notion of value places emphasis on the comparison between the benefits of the different offers. The study of value within the context of tourism services has been the focus of many studies, with these studies showing that value is a multi-dimensional concept. For example, Petrick (2002a) identified five dimensions of perceived value: (1) quality; (2) emotional reactions; (3) monetary price, (4) behavioural price and (5) reputation. Focusing on restaurants, Kwun (2004) identified three components of value: brand, price and risk.

Golf tourism satisfaction studies

Despite the relevance of golf as a tourism activity, the literature on golf tourists' satisfaction is rather limited. One of the earliest studies (Petrick, Backman, & Bixler, 1999) examined the determinants of golf course satisfaction across different types of golf courses. Three years later, Petrick and colleagues (Petrick, 2002a; 2002b; Petrick & Backman, 2002) continued to explore the factors influencing golf tourists' satisfaction. These studies have examined whether novelty (Petrick, 2002b), experience use history (Petrick, 2002a) and attribute and information satisfaction (Petrick & Backman, 2002) were related to golf travellers' satisfaction. More contemporary work has focused on golf attributes (Krohn, 2008; Hutchinson, Wang, & Lai, 2010), emotions (Hutchinson et al., 2010) and service quality and value (Hennessey, Macdonald, & MacEachern, 2008; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Moital & Dias, 2012). These studies, which are of a quantitative nature, have assessed the relationship between satisfaction and its predictors through a range of statistical methods, including ANOVA (Petrick, 2002a), standard (Petrick, 2002b) and stepwise (Petrick & Backman, 2002) multiple regression and more recently, structural equation modelling (Hutchinson et al., 2009; Hutchinson et al., 2010). With the exception of Moital and Dias (2012), who compared hard-core and recreational golf-tourists, what these studies have failed to do is to examine the determinants of satisfaction across different types of golf tourists, including across countries of origin. The next section reviews research on the relationship between culture and satisfaction.

Country of origin and satisfaction

One important characteristic of tourism products is that they are invariably consumed by tourists from a myriad of countries. The examination of the extent to which country of origin influences tourist behaviour, including tourist satisfaction, has received some attention in the tourism literature. The argument behind the study of how the country of origin influences the consumption of tourism products lies in the assumption that nations have distinct cultural characteristics that result in unique expectations (Kaufman-Scarborough, 2000). These cultural characteristics manifest themselves in the form of, for example, cultural norms, which serve as a basis in the formation of expectations (Weiemaier, 2000). Several authors have researched the relationship between the country of origin and tourist satisfaction (for a detailed review see Kozak, 2001). In general, these studies concluded that tourist satisfaction is influenced by the country of origin to some extent (e.g. Kozak, 2001; Yu & Goulden, 2006; Tsang & Ap, 2007). In contrast, other studies found no relationship between country of origin and satisfaction (e.g. Spreng & Chiou, 2002). No studies were found addressing the relationship between country of origin and satisfaction in the context of golf tourism. Hence, since understanding how such relationship unfolds in the context of golf tourism can contribute to better destination management, this paper sought to examine the extent to which the determinants of satisfaction vary across tourists' country of origin.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and questionnaire design

In order to determine which factors influence golf tourist satisfaction, data from the Lisbon Tourism Board's 2008 survey on the profile of golf tourists in Lisbon (Portugal) was used. The sample was stratified based on the number of foreign golf tourists, divided by nationality, which visited Lisbon in 2007. The data was collected through CAPI PDA (Computer Assisted Personal Interviews – Personal Digital Assistant). A total of 521 usable questionnaires were collected, 198 of which were from British nationals, 119 from Nordic tourists (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) and the remaining 204 were from other countries. For the purposes of this study, a golf tourist is a tourist who has played at least once in one of the golf courses located within the Lisbon Tourism Region.

Tourists were approached around the reception area and/or club house of seven (18-hole) golf courses that are considered as representative of the golf courses in the Lisbon Coast region. The vast majority of golf courses were located in the Estoril Coast/Sintra and Setúbal/Blue Coast areas, thus data was collected at three courses in each of these regions. The seventh course was located in the West (Oeste) region, where there are only a small number of courses. The questionnaire, developed in Portuguese, was translated by qualified translators into four languages: English, French, Spanish and German. The questionnaire contained 10 variables reflecting the satisfaction with a number of attributes of Lisbon as a golf tourism destination. Five of the factors are related to the quality of golf courses (technical quality, landscape setting, service quality, quality of equipment, ease of booking), one focuses on the quality of accommodation and another on the ease of access to golf courses from where tourists are staying. The remaining three attributes focus on the value of Lisbon as a golfing destination and include the satisfaction with green fees, the cost of playing golf and the price of accommodation. The questionnaire also included a question measuring overall satisfaction with Lisbon as a golfing destination. Both the attributes and overall satisfaction were measured on a scale from 1 to 10, with one referring to minimum satisfaction and 10 to maximum satisfaction.

Table 1 shows the demographic and tripographic characteristics for all the respondents, as well as the British and the Nordic golf tourists. Virtually all respondents were over 45 years old, with the sample containing slightly more males than females. Typically, respondents stayed 4 nights in the Estoril Coast or in Setúbal/Blue Coast and played at two golf courses during their stay in Lisbon. No differences were found between British and Nordic golf tourists with regards to demographic and tripographic characteristics, except for age where Nordic tourists tended to be older than British tourists (as given by the higher mean rank).

Table 1. Demographic and tripographic profile of golf tourists (Frequencies, Chi-Square and Mann-Whitney)

	All		British		Nordic		Mann-Whitney / Chi-Square
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Age							
26-35	4	0.8	1	0.5	0	0.0	Mean Rank (British)= 151.53 Mean Rank (Nordic)= 174.05 U= 13.626 // Sig: 0.018
36-45	4	0.8	3	1.5	0	0.0	
46-55	257	49.0	107	53.8	50	41.7	
56-65	44	.84	11	5.5	11	9.2	
+65	216	41.1	77	38.7	59	49.2	
Gender							
Male	278	53.0	99	49.7	68	56.7	$\chi^2=1.436$ $p=0.231$
Female	247	47.0	100	50.3	52	43.3	
Number of nights spent in Lisbon							
1-3	33	6.3	10	5.0	7	5.8	Mean Rank (British)= 159.19 Mean Rank (Nordic)= 161.35 U= 12.101 // Sig: 0.758
4	429	81.7	167	83.9	97	80.8	
5	31	5.9	11	5.5	9	7.5	
6+	32	6.1	11	5.5	7	5.8	
Staying where?							
Estoril Coast	350	66.7	137	68.8	81	67.5	$\chi^2=0.066$ $p=0.968$
Setúbal/Blue Coast	137	26.1	49	24.6	61	28.8	
West (Oeste)	38	7.2	13	6.5	8	6.7	
Number of golf courses to be played at							
1	44	8.7	13	6.5	7	5.8	Mean Rank (British)= 158.65 Mean Rank (Nordic)= 162.25 U= 12.209 // Sig: 0.4428
2	477	90.9	186	93.5	111	92.5	
3	4	0.8	0	0.0	2	1.7	

Data analysis

Logistic regression was employed in order to identify the determinants of golf tourists' satisfaction. Logistic regression has been shown to be an effective technique to discriminate between two groups in a marketing research context (Akinci, Kaynak, Atilgan, & Aksoy, 2007). The objective of logistic regression is to establish the probability of a tourist belonging to one of two variables (the dependent variable) given other variables (the determinants or independent variables) (Field, 2000). In this paper, the dependent variable is global satisfaction. Bearing in mind that logistic regression requires two groups in the dependent variable, golf tourists were classified into 'very satisfied' (answer to the global satisfaction question equal or above 8) and 'moderately satisfied' (answer to the global satisfaction question between 5 and 7 – there were no answer below 5). The determinants or independent variables are the 10 factors that reflect the quality and value of Lisbon as a golf tourism destination. Three regressions were carried out: one for the data as a whole, and one for each of the geographic areas (Britain and Nordic countries).

RESULTS

Logistic regression works by comparing two models: one that includes only the constant in the regression equation (that is all determinants are omitted) and one that includes the determinants (Field, 2000). These two models are then compared and it is from this comparison that conclusions are made with regards to whether the determinants make a significant contribution to explain the dependent variable. This comparison is made by

looking at several measures, including the log-likelihood value, the classification accuracy and the Nagelkerke value. If these indicators suggest that the determinants contribute to explain global satisfaction, the contribution of each determinant is then analysed through the $\text{Exp}(\beta)$ value (a more detailed explanation of each of these values is provided along with the results).

The characteristics of the three models (all golf tourists, Nordic golf tourists and British golf tourists) are presented in Table 2. An analysis of the *log-likelihood* values for the initial model (which contains only the constant) and the new model (which contains the 10 determinants) shows a decrease which indicates that the inclusion of the determinants results in fewer unexplained observations. Hence, adding the determinants improves the confidence of the model in correctly classifying golf tourists in terms of whether they are very satisfied or moderately satisfied (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In other words, the model that contains the determinants is better at predicting to which group a golf tourist belongs to (i.e. if (s)he left moderately or very satisfied).

Table 2 - Characteristics of the models

	All golf tourists (N=521)			British golf tourists (N=196)			Nordic golf tourists (N=118)		
	Value	Df	p	Value	Df	p	Value	Df	p
Initial -2 Log likelihood (χ^2)	690.987			254.291			161.818		
Final -2 Log likelihood (χ^2)	401.254			140.500			60.798		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.581			0.606			0.771		
Initial classification group	62.2%			64.8%			55.9%		
Moderately satisfied	0.0%			0.0%			0.0%		
Very satisfied	100%			100%			100%		
Final classification group	81.2%			82.7%			85.6		
Moderately satisfied	71.1%			66.7%			87.9		
Very satisfied	87.3%			91.3%			85.6		
Model coefficient (χ^2)	289.734	10	0.000	113.791	10	0.000	101.120	10	0.000
Hosmer e Lemeshow's goodness-of-fit test (χ^2)	10.855	8	.210	8.655	8	0.372	5.428	8	.711

Another way of analysing the success of the logistic regression model is by looking at the classification accuracy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The classification accuracy looks at the ability of the model to correctly predict the global satisfaction category to which a golf tourist belongs to (that is, whether a tourist left very or moderately satisfied) given his/her satisfaction with the quality and value of the golfing destination. In the initial model (with only the constant), the classification accuracy equals the percentage of individuals in the group that contains a higher number of individuals (in this study, the very satisfied tourists). By adding the determinants to the model, it is possible to evaluate the extent to which the classification accuracy improves. The results show that adding the 10 determinants has improved the classification accuracy in the three models (all golf tourists, British and Nordic). The percentages increased from 62.2% (all tourists), 64.8% (British tourists) and 55.9% (Nordic tourists) to above 80% in all cases.

Nagelkerke's measure, which works as a pseudo R², can also contribute to understand the extent to which adding determinants improves the model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The Nagelkerke's value is usually employed as an approximate measure of explained variance in the dependent variable by the determinants (Field, 2000). As show in Table 2, Nagelkerke's values suggest that the three models are able to explain a good proportion of the variance in golf tourists' global satisfaction with their trip to Lisbon. As far as all golf tourists are concerned, the 10 determinants explain nearly 60% of the variance in global satisfaction. With regards to the two nationality groups analysed, the 10 determinants explain a greater proportion of the variance in global satisfaction of Nordic tourists (77%) than of British

tourists (61%). The value for British tourist can be considered very good, while for Nordic tourists exceptional.

Having established the validity of the three models of golf tourists' satisfaction, the next step involves analysing the parameter estimates for each of the three models (Table 3). Two values are presented for each model: p and Exp(β). The p value enables the identification of those determinants that make a significant contribution to explain global satisfaction. This paper established a 5% probability value ($p < 0.05$) to accept a determinant as making a significant contribution. Once the significant determinants are identified, the Exp(β) value, also referred to as the *odds ratio*, is analysed. Exp(β) value refers to the probability that a golf tourist is very satisfied if the determinant increases in 1. For example, a Exp(β) value of 10 means that an increase in 1 on the satisfaction with a determinant increases 10 times the probability of a tourist to move from the moderately satisfied to the very satisfied camp.

Table 3 - Determinants of satisfaction

	All golf tourists		British golf tourists		Nordic golf tourists	
	p	Exp(β)	p	Exp(β)	p	Exp(β)
Technical quality of golf courses	.021*	1.492	.509	1.209	.341	1.647
Landscape setting of golf courses	.012*	1.732	.001*	4.030	.024*	4.114
Service quality of golf courses	.168	1.350	.824	.915	.005*	7.374
Quality of equipment in golf courses	.015*	1.847	.044*	2.464	.209	.366
Ease of booking of golf courses	.003*	2.047	.012*	3.335	.143	2.902
Cost of playing golf	.080	1.505	.521	1.298	.867	1.128
Green fee	.027*	1.762	.046*	2.363	.161	3.024
Access to golf courses from accommodation	.067	1.616	.790	1.126	.004*	8.745
Quality of accommodation	.282	.727	.112	.421	.931	.936
Price of accommodation	.001*	2.587	.003*	5.237	.207	2.373
Constant	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Legend: * $p < 0.05$

The results indicate that six of the 10 determinants contribute to explain global satisfaction of golf tourists (Table 3). From these six determinants, according to the Exp(β) value, the price of accommodation emerges as the most important determinant (2.6). This value means that an increase in the satisfaction with accommodation price increases 2.6 times the probability of a golf tourist leaving Lisbon very satisfied. In descending order of importance, the other significant determinants are the ease of booking of golf courses (Exp(β) of 2), quality of equipment in golf courses (Exp(β) of 1.8), green fee (Exp(β) of 1.8), landscape setting of golf courses (Exp(β) of 1.7) and technical quality of golf courses (Exp(β) of 1.5).

With regards to the results across the range of nationalities, the results show that five factors determine the satisfaction of British golf tourists and three of Nordic golf tourists. The perceived performance of the landscape setting of golf courses was a significant determinant for both British and Nordic golf tourists, with similar levels of influence for both groups (Exp(β) of just over 4). The other factors that determine the satisfaction of British and Nordic golf tourists are different. For the British, the price of accommodation was found to be most important determinant of global satisfaction (Exp(β) of 5.2). Other significant determinants include the quality of equipment in golf courses (Exp(β) of 2.5), ease of booking of golf courses (Exp(β) of 3.3) and green fee (Exp(β) of 2.4). For the Nordic, the most important determinant was the access to golf courses from accommodation (Exp(β) of 8.7), followed by the service quality of golf courses (Exp(β) of 7.4). In summary, the satisfaction of Nordic golf tourists is determined by fewer and different factors when compared to the British.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The golf tourism market is highly competitive, with several Southern European and Mediterranean countries striving to attract this lucrative market. In this competitive environment, the objective of any tourist destination should be to make sure as many tourists as possible find their experience highly satisfying. However, even the most competitive destinations are unlikely to highly satisfy all tourists. In this case understanding the reasons behind differential levels of satisfaction can provide destination managers with a basis for taking action aiming at improving those areas that are found to be critical. This paper attempted to address this issue in the context of golf tourism. Using the Lisbon Tourism Board tourist survey, the paper used logistic regression to examine the determinants of golf tourists' satisfaction. Ten attributes of Lisbon as a golfing destination, related to both quality and value, were examined as potential determinants of satisfaction.

The results suggest that increasing levels of satisfaction of golf tourists requires improvements in the performance of a range of factors, both related to quality and value of Lisbon as a golfing destination. At the quality level, the results suggest that improvements in the satisfaction with four areas could lead to greater levels of trip satisfaction: ease of booking of golf courses, quality of equipment in golf courses, landscape setting of golf courses and technical quality of golf courses. Two value related factors were also found to be significant determinants (price of accommodation and green fee).

According to Bowen and Clarke (2002) and Pizam (1999), different cultural backgrounds could result in differentiated perceptions about services, including perceptions of quality and value. Therefore, a second objective of this paper was to examine the extent to which culture influences satisfaction in the context of golf tourism by comparing the determinants of satisfaction across two nationality groups: British and Nordic tourists. The results appear to support the contention that culture influences satisfaction, since the factors that determine the satisfaction of British tourists are fundamentally different of those that determine the satisfaction of Nordic tourists. For example, the satisfaction of British golf tourists appears to be determined by a mix of quality and value factors, while the satisfaction of Nordic golf tourists appears to be determined by quality alone. For British golf tourists, the price of accommodation was the most important determinant, while for the Nordic it was the access to golf courses (highest odds ratios).

Implications for practice and theory

Monitoring quality and value perceptions is required as an input to marketing decisions. The results of the study have highlighted possible areas of improvement that could lead to higher levels of satisfaction, both at an aggregate level (all nationalities) and at the nationality level. When the strategy of the golfing destination is to enhance the broad levels of satisfaction, the focus should be on improving satisfaction with attributes such as the price of accommodation, ease of booking golf courses and the quality of equipment in the golf course. However, given that destinations usually have country-/region-specific marketing strategies, they should consider the specific characteristics of each nationality when designing these strategies. The results have shown that improvements which were found to be important for the whole sample were not necessarily important for a specific nationality group. For example, the price of accommodation was found to be a determinant for the British, but not for the Nordic golf tourists. Hence, if golfing destinations aim to improve the satisfaction levels of the Nordic, they will have to look at other areas of the golf product other than the price of accommodation.

The need to look beyond the general patterns in the data is perhaps more evident when attributes found not to be relevant when the whole sample of golf tourists is considered, were found to be important determinants for specific nationalities. In this study there were two such cases: access to golf courses and service quality of golf courses. If only a broad analysis had been carried out, the obvious marketing implication would be that these two areas should not be a priority. However, the analysis by nationality not only clearly identified these two attributes as critical influences on the overall satisfaction of the Nordic golf tourists, but also that these were the two most important determinants (highest odds ratio). Therefore, it is clear that interventions to enhance satisfaction with the access to, and service quality of golf courses directed at an important market such as Nordic golf tourists are justified.

Conceptually, the results of this paper challenge the validity of running statistical analysis using whole samples as the results could be misleading with regards to the critical influences on satisfaction. Exploring the data across groups within important segmentation variables, such as nationality, is recommended as it can identify relevant determinants for some of the groups. The identification of relevant determinants of satisfaction for individual segments will provide valuable marketing intelligence which can then be used in developing effective marketing strategies for specific segments.

Limitations and further research

This study contains several limitations that lead to opportunities for further research. Although the Nagelkerke values and the classification accuracies suggest that the 10 attributes (determinants) explain a good proportion of the variance in global satisfaction, future studies could consider a more extensive set of value/service attributes. Besides attributes, other variables could also be included in the model, such as trip features and personal characteristics of the golf tourist. These include independent vs. organised trip, first time vs. repeat visitor and handicap. Unlike linear regression, logistic regression can accommodate categorical variables such as the ones just mentioned.

Due to the low number of tourists from other nationalities, the analysis was restricted to British and Nordic nationals. Larger samples of golf tourists will enable comparing a more diverse set of countries that are also important demand markets for golf tourism (e.g. Benelux and Germany). Finally, studying golf tourism satisfaction could be complemented by a more qualitative type study, so that the reasons behind satisfaction can be researched and understood in greater depth. Qualitative studies could help understanding more about the satisfaction with each of the quality/value factors that were found to be important determinants in this paper. For example, interviewing a sample of moderately satisfied tourists could help understanding the reasons behind satisfaction with the green fee.

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