

THE IMPACT OF GOLF EVENT IMAGE AND PARTICIPATION ON GOLFER LOYALTY TO GOLF TOURISM EVENTS

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Abstract

This study evaluated the influence of golf event image and participation in golf tourism events on golfers' loyalty to sports tourism events. By applying the PLS-SEM method through a survey of 265 golfers, the research results showed that all hypotheses were supported. The results show that destination image has a significant influence on participation, satisfaction and golfers' loyalty. The study also shows that participation has a direct relationship with satisfaction and golfers' loyalty and the satisfaction significantly determines golfers' loyalty to golf tourism events. Besides, the study shows the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between golf event image, participation in golf tourism events, and loyalty. Conclusions about contributions to scholarship, applications in management, limitations of the research, and directions for future research are also discussed in the study.

Keywords: Loyalty, Golf Event Image, Participation, Satisfaction, Golf Tourism Events, Golfers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Golf is a subject loved by many people of all ages. Among them, golf tournaments in Vietnam are increasingly significant in scale and international in scope. Each golf tournament has its unique highlights, giving participants many options. Over the past 20 years, Vietnam's golf community has grown enormously. Initially, only a few politicians, business people, and foreigners working in Vietnam participated in playing this sport, but now this community has expanded to 20,000 people (in 2015).) and increase to about 50,000 people by 2020, and the number of golf courses will increase to 120 18-hole standard golf courses. Studies by Berjoyo et al. (2016) and Hwang & Lyu (2015) show that economic development and integration of culture, lifestyle, and sports have led to the formation of this group—young and average-income customers interested in this sport. However, any problem has two sides. On the positive side, the young customer group will bring development to golf and increase the number of players on the golf course. Therefore, while the number of golfers in developed countries such as the US and Japan is declining, the number in Vietnam is growing steadily. On the downside, young players constantly change playing locations to experience new playing feelings, challenges, and spaces (Kasiri et al., 2017).

Therefore, with the increase in golf courses in Vietnam and other countries in the region, golf course businesses and managers in Vietnam face significant challenges. Golf constantly improves course quality and support services to attract new and retain current players. Sports tourism is considered one of the tourism products that contributes significantly to the development of tourism in particular and the economy in general (Wafi et al., 2017). According to statistics from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019), sports tourism attracts about 12 to 15 million international visitors yearly, with a growth rate of 6%/year and an average of 800 billion USD revenue, accounting for 10% of the total revenue of the global

tourism industry. According to Research Allied Market's market report (2021), the global sports tourism industry was pegged at \$323.42 billion in 2020. However, it is expected to reach \$1.8 trillion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 16.1%.

The research model on loyalty to sports tourism events still needs to be more controversial in academic research (Vinh & Dung, 2023; Fotiadis et al., 2021). Studies show that for each type of sporting event, athletes' motivations to participate are different (Milovanović et al., 2021; Wafi et al., 2017). However, many studies have been conducted to study tourists' participation in sporting events (Goebert & Greenhalgh, 2020; Wafi et al., 2017). However, research on golfers' participation is still limited (Fotiadis et al., 2021). Stemming from the role of sports tourism in tourism industry development and the limitations of previous studies, they were conducted to clarify the relationship between destination image, participation motivation, and golfer participation in golf events.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) summarized and evaluated 53 different concepts of loyalty among scientists in fields such as business and psychology, but until now, there has been no uniform definition of loyalty. Oliver (1999) emphasized the impact of loyalty on customers' repeat purchasing behavior when defining customer loyalty as a commitment to Consistently implementing customer behavior to repurchase products and services in the future.

Santouridis and Trivellas (2010) argue that using only the perspective of customer repeat purchase behavior requires considering other aspects to explain loyalty fully. There have been many studies related to sports tourism (Goebert & Greenhalgh, 2020; Perić & al., 2019); according to the World Tourism Organization, sports tourism is a type that allows tourists to watch or participate in sports tourism into a competitive sporting event (UNWTO, 2019). For amateur athletes, sporting events are often small-scale and informal (Vargáné & Serra, 2014). Amateur athletes are defined as those who are passionate about one sport sports for reasons other than livelihood (Milovanović & al., 2021), with no owner, no contract, and no obligation to play for any organization other than one's own passion body (Perić & al., 2019). Tourist loyalty is essential for sustainable development (Halpenny et al., 2016). According to Suhartanto (2018), loyalty can be divided into two parts: loyalty and attitude (having a positive attitude about the score and being willing to recommend it to others) and behavioral loyalty (showing by returning behavior to the destination in future visits)..

Destination images are beliefs, ideas, and impressions about a particular destination. Lee and colleagues (2016) argue that destination image is the impression formed in the minds of tourists about the destination, and it is shared with the community in many different ways (Jenkins, 2008). The concept of the image of a sports tourism event is also defined in the same way as the destination image (Halpenny et al., 2016). Regardless of the scale of the event, the image of that event depends on two components: cognitive image and emotional image.

Participation is defined as the decision to participate in a sports tourism event. According to Lee and colleagues (2014), the decision to travel is greatly influenced by the natural images of the destination arrivals and visitors' impressions of the destination. Goebert and Greenhalgh (2020) demonstrated the relationship between destination image and participation in tourism events. Katsoni and Vrontou (2017) approach destination image in terms of tourism promotion activities that make a strong impression on players about a particular sports tourism event. From these arguments, the research team proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: The image of the event has an impact on golfer's participation in golf tourism events

Destination image affects tourists' subjective feelings, contributing to their satisfaction. Vinh (2013) argues that entertainment and sightseeing activities must be considered destination attributes. These events have activities that stimulate tourists' impressions of the destination; the effects from the destination's image will bring tourists curiosity, desire, and, finally, action to satisfy them (Hungenberg et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction is often viewed as an individual's perception of product/service excellence and expectations. Meeting customer expectations will bring satisfaction. For tourism sports events, Tzetzis et al. (2014) and Milovanović et al. (2021) argue that factors related to the image of the destination, such as facilities, nature of the event, The events and history of the tournament, also lead to the fun of the participants. So, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: The image of a golf tourism event directly impacts golfer satisfaction.

Annarelli et al. (2016) and Wafi et al. (2017) showed a positive relationship between motivation, participation, and athlete satisfaction; in fact, these relationships have been evidenced in everyday tourism activities (Stylidis et al., 2020). However, research on this relationship still needs to be more widespread in sports tourism and needs to be done more. Therefore, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Participation in golf tourism events directly impacts golfer satisfaction.

Several studies have examined the influence of image, motivation, and participation on travel behavior. Fotiadis et al. (2021) and Taberner et al. (2022) have provided more specific evidence of these relationships in tourism sports events. However, proving motivation, participation, and loyalty is controversial (Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Katsoni & Vrontou, 2017). So, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: The image of golf tourism events has a direct impact on golfer loyalty

H5: Participation in golf tourism has a direct impact on golfer loyalty

Koo et al. (2014). Milovanović et al. (2021) and Tzetzis and colleagues (2014) found a significant correlation between satisfaction levels and revisit intentions at sports tourism events with specific activities directly related to the characteristics of the destination. Our survey found that travel satisfaction has a direct, significant positive correlation with revisit intention (Koo et al., 2014). Besides, in tourism research, the mediating role of satisfaction is often considered an indirect relationship between tourism service quality and satisfaction (Suhartanto, 2018). Research has also demonstrated the mediating role of satisfaction in sports

tourism events (Halpenny et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2014). However, the mediating role of satisfaction between motivation, participation, and loyalty variables is still lacking in research on general tourism and sports tourism in particular. So, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H6: Satisfaction has a direct impact on golfer loyalty.

H7: The image of golf tourism events indirectly affects loyalty through golfer satisfaction.

H8: Participation in golf tourism events indirectly affects loyalty through golfer satisfaction.

Figure 1 presents the research framework proposed by the author.

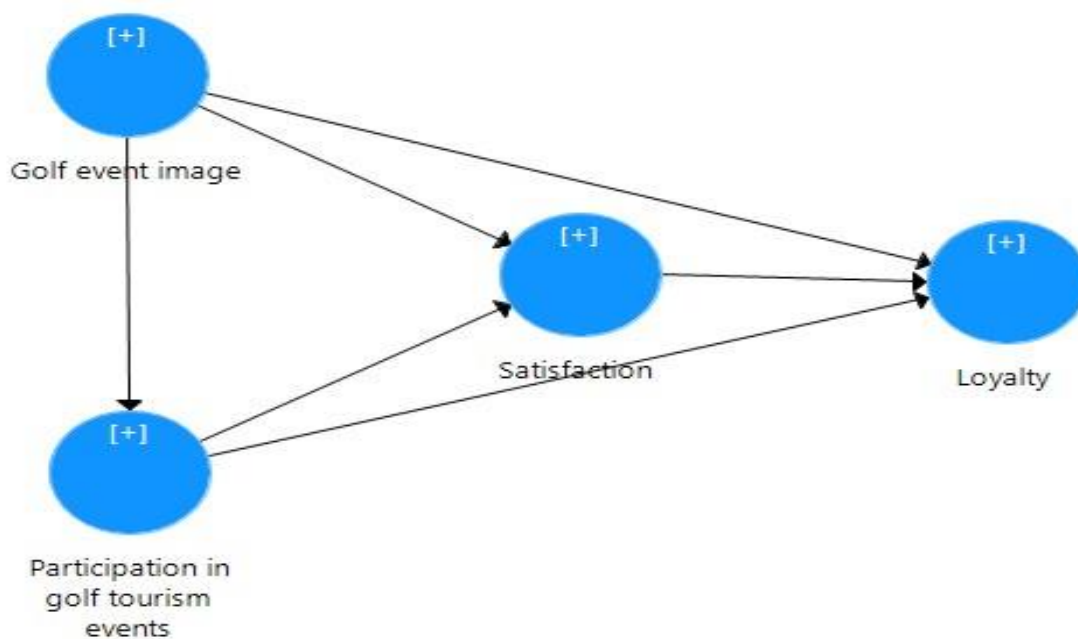


Figure 1: Research framework

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research combines synthesizing, comparing, and analyzing data and secondary data with qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research was conducted through 4 steps, including:

Step 1: Initial qualitative research

Step 2: Preliminary quantitative research with a survey sample was conducted with 40 golfers

Step 3: Formal quantitative research

Step 4: Additional qualitative research.

All observed variables in the constructs, namely destination image, participation, satisfaction, and loyalty, are measured based on a five-level Likert scale.

In addition, the questionnaire also surveyed demographic information such as gender, age, and occupation. Table 1 describes the observed variables and their origins.

Table 1: Observed variables and sources

Variables	Observed variables	Code	Sources
Golf event image	The event venue is a famous tourist destination	HA1	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	Reputation of the tournament and the organizer	HA2	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	The program includes special tours and accommodation packages	HA3	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	There are famous athletes participating	HA4	Vinh and Dung (2023)
Participation in golf tourism events	Spend much time practicing to participate in this event	TG1	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	Participating in this event costs money to equip the accompanying equipment	TG2	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	Pay fees and other expenses for this event	TG3	Vinh and Dung (2023)
Satisfaction	This event brings more benefits than it costs	HL1	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	This event was the best of all the events I attended	HL2	Fotiadis et al (2021)
	This event was much better than I expected	HL3	Fotiadis et al (2021)
Loyalty	I would choose to attend this event again if they were still holding it	TT1	Suhartanto et al (2020)
	I will recommend this destination and sporting event to relatives and friends	TT2	Vinh and Dung (2023)
	I will post pictures of destinations and events on social networks	TT3	Suhartanto et al (2020)

Primary data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. The study uses partial linear structural model analysis (PLS-SEM). According to Henseler et al. (2012), PLS-SEM is evaluated through measurement and structural models. The measurement model is evaluated through the concepts of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Next, the structural model was analyzed through the bootstrapping method with 3,000 iterations to evaluate the importance of the path coefficients, values such as the variance inflation factor (VIF), the level of influence (f^2), Coefficient for assessing out-of-sample forecasting capacity (Q^2) and explanatory coefficient of independent variables on a dependent variable (R^2).

4. RESULT

4.1. Results of golfer demographic

Three hundred questionnaires were distributed to golfers from May 4 to 11, 2023, at the Vietnam Open 202 golf tournament, Lexus Challenge 2023 golf tournament, and Nam A Bank Vietnam Masters 2023 golf tournament. Out of 300 survey questionnaires, the number of ballots collected was 286. After eliminating invalid ballots, the total number of usable ballots is 265, accounting for 88.3% of the total number. Table 2 describes the demographic information of the golfers surveyed in the study.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of golfer demographics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	172	64.9
	Female	93	35.1
Age	<25 year-old	39	14.7
	26 - 35 year-old	113	42.6
	46 - 45 year-old	85	32.1
	> 45 year-old	28	10.6
Occupation	Businessmen	58	21.9
	Office staff	119	44.9
	Other	88	32.2
Education	High school	39	14.7
	University	194	73.2
	Graduate	32	12.1
Times attended	First time	91	34.3
	2nd time or more	174	65.7
Total		265	100.0

4.2. Measurement model analysis

A measurement model with 4 variables and 13 observed variables was analyzed. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability and accuracy of the structural model.

Variable	Code	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	C, R	AVE
Golf event image	HA1	0.739	0.857	0.904	0.703
	HA2	0.837			
	HA3	0.895			
	HA4	0.875			
Participation in golf tourism events	TG1	0.881	0.831	0.888	0.667
	TG2	0.877			
	TG3	0.797			
Satisfaction	HL1	0.925	0.886	0.929	0.814
	HL2	0.903			
	HL3	0.878			
Loyalty	TT1	0.882	0.858	0.914	0.779
	TT2	0.906			
	TT3	0.859			

The results in Table 3 show that all observed variables have factor loading values > 0.7, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability indexes > 0.7, and the AVE index > 0.5. Therefore, the data analyzed here ensures reliability (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4 shows that the model's discriminant validity is guaranteed because all values on the diagonal are more significant than those in the corresponding column..

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Golf event image	Loyalty	Participation in golf tourism events	Satisfaction
Golf event image	0.838			
Loyalty	0.553	0.883		
Participation in golf tourism events	0.614	0.583	0.817	
Satisfaction	0.523	0.691	0.519	0.902

According to Henseler et al. (2015), if HTMT \leq 0.85, a discriminant value between two latent variables will be guaranteed. Table 5 shows the results of HTMT value less than 0.85 indicating discriminant validity.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Golf event image	Loyalty	Participation in golf tourism events	Satisfaction
Golf event image				
Loyalty	0.643			
Participation in golf tourism events	0.722	0.687		
Satisfaction	0.599	0.791	0.598	

4.3. Analyze structural models

Table 6 shows that all VIF values in this study are less than 3, indicating no multicollinearity problem between the predictor constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 6: The value of VIF, f^2 , R^2 and R^2 và Q^2

	R^2	Q^2	Participation in golf tourism events		Satisfaction		Loyalty	
			f^2	VIF	f^2	VIF	f^2	VIF
Golf event image			0.60	1.00	0.10	1.60	0.02	1.76
Participation in golf tourism events	0.375	0.242			0.09	1.60	0.07	1.75
Satisfaction	0.331	0.262					0.36	1.50
Loyalty	0.554	0.462						

The results show that R^2 values $>$ 30% of the independent variable's explanation level for the dependent variable's variation are accepted. The results show that all associations have a moderate influence level with $f^2 >$ 0.02, indicating a reasonable effect size. All Q^2 values $>$ 0, indicating out-of-sample predictive power of the research variables in the structural model. The results of structural model evaluation, including path coefficients, t-values, and p-values, are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Results of direct links

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values	Result
Golf event image -> Loyalty	0.553	10.218	0.000	Supported
Golf event image -> Participation in golf tourism events	0.614	12.368	0.000	Supported
Golf event image -> Satisfaction	0.523	8.796	0.000	Supported
Participation in golf tourism events -> Loyalty	0.391	5.345	0.000	Supported
Participation in golf tourism events -> Satisfaction	0.317	4.484	0.000	Supported
Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.489	8.931	0.000	Supported

According to Hair et al. (2021), for the hypotheses to be supported, the t value must be greater than 1.96, and p must be less than 0.05. The results show that destination image has a significant influence on participation ($\beta = 0.614$; $t = 12.368$; $p < 0.01$), satisfaction ($\beta = 0.523$; $t = 8.796$; $p < 0.01$,) and golfers' loyalty ($\beta = 0.553$, $t = 10.218$, $p < 0.01$). Besides, The study also shows that participation has a direct relationship with satisfaction ($\beta = 0.391$; $t = 5.345$; $p < 0.01$) and golfers' loyalty ($\beta = 0.317$; $t = 4.484$; $p < 0.01$). The study also showed that satisfaction significantly determines golfers' loyalty to golf tourism events ($\beta = 0.489$; $t = 8.931$; $p < 0.01$). Figure 2 shows the research results of the model.

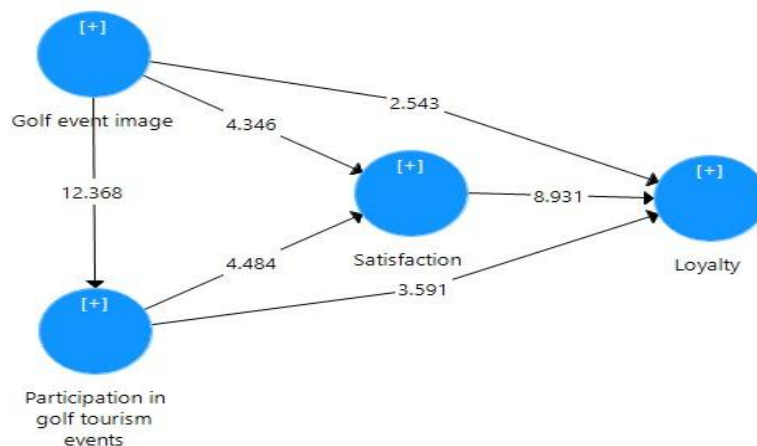


Figure 2: PLS-SEM results

To test the mediating role of the satisfaction variable, t value > 1.96 , $p < 0.05$, and confidence interval > 0 (Zhao & al., 2010). Table 8 shows the indirect links between event image, participation, and loyalty through the mediating variable satisfaction.

Table 8: Results of indirect links

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	Confidence Intervals		P Values	Result
			2.5%	97.5%		
Participation in golf tourism events -> Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.155	4.139	0.082	0.230	0.000	Supported
Golf event image -> Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.161	3.616	0.083	0.255	0.000	Supported

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to evaluate the influence of golf tourism event image and participation on golfer loyalty. By applying the PLS-SEM method through a survey of 265 golfers, the research results showed that all hypotheses were supported. Besides, the research also strengthens the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between golf tourism event image, participation, and golfers' loyalty. Besides the results are similar to previous studies showing the direct influence of event image, participation and loyalty (Fotiadis et al., 2021; Halpenny et al., 2016; Milovanović et al., 2021; Wafi et al., 2017) study shows a difference in results in the relationship between participation motivation and loyalty, while the study results do not show a direct relationship between motivation and loyalty, but shows an indirect relationship of this link through satisfaction, which is considered an exciting finding that also reinforces the mediating role of satisfaction in traditional research model: Destination image – satisfaction – loyalty (Halpenny et al., 2016; Koo et al., 2014; Milovanović et al., 2021; Wafi et al., 2017).

The results obtained in this study provide some suggestions for both golf managers and sports tourism event organizers. First, the research results show the impact of golf tourism event image on participation. Organizing the event image needs to focus on the schedule, the appeal of sports events and relaxation activities, rest, and sightseeing at the destination. Successful organization of previous events is also one of the attractions for athletes. Besides, the research results also show the critical role of satisfaction in loyalty directly and indirectly. Therefore, improving the quality of service, prestige of the tournament, and choice of reputable destinations are very important for attracting tourists and amateur athletes to participate in golf tourism events. Despite scientific and practical contributions, the research still shows limitations, such as the research space being only conducted at one event in Northern Vietnam; there has yet to be a comparison between the demographic characteristics of golfers concerning loyalty. Although the research sample size is large enough for the PLS-SEM method, future studies need to expand the sample size and the research space with a wider variety of events and competitions. Future studies also need to add variables such as expectations, service quality, or perceived value to clarify the research model on loyalty in sports tourism events further.

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