

7-1-2023

Perceived Service Quality and Overall Satisfaction: From a Segmentation Perspective Unique to Golf Spectators

Tomo Tokuyama

Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences, tokuyama@ouhs.ac.jp

Chris Greenwell

University of Louisville, tcgreenwell@louisville.edu

Junko Deguchi

Tokai Gakuen University

Masashi Shinjo

*The Japan Ladies Professional Golf Association*Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), and the [Sports Management Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tokuyama, Tomo; Greenwell, Chris; Deguchi, Junko; and Shinjo, Masashi (2023) "Perceived Service Quality and Overall Satisfaction: From a Segmentation Perspective Unique to Golf Spectators," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*. Vol. 15 : Iss. 2.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/jasm-2023-V15-I2-1963>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol15/iss2/1>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Applied Sport Management by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>.

Perceived Service Quality and Overall Satisfaction: From a Segmentation Perspective Unique to Golf Spectators

Tomo Tokuyama

Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences

T. Christopher Greenwell

University of Louisville

Junko Deguchi

Tokai Gakuen University

Masashi Shinjo

Japan Ladies Professional Golfers Association

Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to examine differences in the relationships between specific aspects of the service encounter and customer satisfaction attributable to consumers' viewing situation and frequency of attendance at golf tournaments. Questionnaires were distributed to spectators attending a major women's golf tournament in Japan, and study participants were asked to rate various service elements and their level of attendance satisfaction. Respondents were grouped by viewing situations (one location, following a specific pairing, or moving the course randomly) and past attendance frequency (new spectators, light spectators, or frequent spectators). Shuttle bus service predicted satisfaction regardless of segment. Merchandise predicted satisfaction for consumers staying in one spot, informational signage predicted satisfaction for followers, and tournament staff predicted satisfaction for movers. Informational signage was correlated with satisfaction for both light and frequent attendees, and tournament staff predicted satisfaction for frequent attendees. Tournament organizers can adjust service strategies to maximize satisfaction for different spectator segments.

Keywords: *golf spectators, service elements, attendance satisfaction, viewing situation*

Please send correspondence to: Tomo Tokuyama, tokuyama@ouhs.ac.jp

Professional golf differs from traditional sport in the manner that it is consumed live. Unlike team sport events (e.g., football, baseball, basketball), where consumers watch from an assigned seat, golf spectators tend to have three main viewing options at a venue: (1) staying at one location and watching a variety of competitors play that specific hole, (2) following a specific golf pairing for 18 holes, and (3) moving around randomly to watch different competitors at various holes. There are also fewer opportunities for golf fans to attend events as most tournaments in a season because the events are held at different courses throughout a country, and tournament locations can be changed each year.

Given differences between how golf and popular team sports such as basketball and football are consumed by sports fans, it is important to then also consider how predictors of sport spectator satisfaction may vary between golf spectators and spectators of team sports. Satisfaction is a consumer's post-evaluative judgement of their recent consumption (Mano & Oliver, 1993). This concept is critical to successful marketing efforts in sports because it is a strong predictor of repeat spectatorship (Finnegan et al., 2020; Lambrecht et al., 2009; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996; Yoshida et al., 2015). Further, because consumer segments with different characteristics (e.g., demographic differences, differences in motives to attend, level of experience) tend to behave differently (Greenberg & McDonald, 1989), it is important for researchers to identify ways to best appeal to and enhance the spectator satisfaction of a variety of consumer segments. Accordingly, the purpose of the current study is to examine differences in the relationships between specific aspects of the service encounter and customer satisfaction attributable to consumers' viewing situation and frequency of attendance at golf tournaments. Although golf is a popular sport, there are only a handful of studies that have examined characteristics and behaviors of golf spectators. This indicates a need for more studies specific to golf spectators (e.g., McDonald et al., 2002; Watanabe & Zhang, 2019). Sport marketers and managers of golf spectator business will find this study useful knowing how potential segments should be treated differently for promoting attendance satisfaction.

Related Literature

Previous studies focusing on golf spectators have examined some aspects of spectators' characteristics and behaviors for both men's and women's tournaments in different countries, such as the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. The focus of the current study is related to golf spectator's perception of service quality, which refers to how well services are delivered to consumers (Yoshida & James, 2010). Within the realm of service quality, the service extensions and physical environment surrounding an event, often referred to as the "sportscape" (Lambrecht et al., 2009; Tsuji et al., 2011; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995) or servicescape (Bitner, 1992), have been found to be a good predictor of customer satisfaction (Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010).

Service quality involves multiple elements of the service experience, including factors such as seating comfort, information signage, and stadium employees who deliver service, of which different elements have been examined in accordance with different settings. In terms of golf spectators, there are only two studies to date examining effects of these factors on spectator satisfaction. One study was by Lambrecht et al. (2009), who examined spectators at a U.S. PGA tournament, and the other was by Son et al. (2018), who collected data from spectators at a Korean LPGA tournament. These studies looked at

different service elements respectively. Like studies in other sport settings, these studies found a positive effect of service quality on spectator satisfaction and identified which specific service elements were more important in relation to satisfaction.

Golf spectators are not homogeneous, as different segments exist. In fact, previous studies in sport settings indicated fans evaluate service elements differently depending on factors such as gender, age, and income (e.g., Greenwell et al., 2002). The two studies mentioned earlier (Lambrecht et al., 2009; Son et al., 2018) in a golf setting also examined by groups: level of perception on service elements and gender, respectively. However, no study to date has incorporated segmentation bases unique to golf spectatorship when examining effects of service quality on satisfaction.

The most prevalent difference between consumers at a golf tournament is viewing situation. Given courses are rather large, and spectators cannot see the entire event like they would at an event such as a basketball or football game, spectators must choose how to consume the event. Some will choose to stay in one spot where they can see more golfers, but only get to see one or two holes. Another option is to follow a specific pairing. In this situation, they may choose to follow their favorite golfers and see the entire course played; however, they will miss out on seeing the other competitors. Some consumers will choose a combination of the two by moving about the course at random. Considering the different options, these consumers will have different experiences and different needs. The first research question states:

RQ1: What elements of service quality are significant in explaining attendance satisfaction for three different viewing situations (one spot, following specific pairing, and moving the course randomly)?

Similarly, golf consumers will have different levels of experience at the event. Golf tournaments are held less often than other spectator sporting events meaning there is likely to be a large percentage of consumers attending for the first time. Golf courses can be large and difficult to manage for new consumers. Their experience will be in contrast to experienced spectators who may know more about how to manage the course and enjoy the event. The second research question states:

RQ2: What elements of service quality are significant in explaining attendance satisfaction for three different levels of attendance frequency (new spectators, light spectators, and frequent spectators)?

Method

Sample and Procedures

Study participants were golf spectators recruited at one of the major tour tournaments of the Japan Ladies Professional Golf Association (JLPGA) in 2019. The sample was selected from a survey population ($N =$ approximately 10,000) of spectators attending the third day of the tournament on Saturday. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was administered at the venue after they finished spectating. As on-site parking was not available for spectators, major access to the event was by satellite parking areas or by a train. A free shuttle bus service was offered from and to the train station nearest from the venue as well as several satellite parking areas, taking approximately 20 minutes for a one-way ride to all destinations.

Because the timing of many spectators heading to the bus terminal was similar, there were lines with a longest wait time of more than 60 minutes for all destinations.

Data collection was implemented with the spectator intercept method used in previous studies (e.g., Robinson et al., 2004). Trained research staff approached spectators as they waited for shuttle service, explained the study, and asked respondents to complete a 10-minute questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected as they got off the bus at the station or satellite parking areas. Although this study collected data in Japan, these findings may also be applicable to golf spectators in North America. According to industry experts (personal communication), the consumer profile (age, income, and playing golf experience) is very similar between golf spectators between Japan and North America. Therefore, we believe those study participants could represent golf spectators in general.

Segmentation Bases

From discussions with tournament officials, viewing situations and attendance frequency were chosen as the grouping variables (segmentation bases) for the following reasons. Viewing situation is a unique attribute of golf spectatorship and accounts for the fact that spectators with different ways to spectate in the event would receive and/or require different level of service. As for attendance frequency, we considered spectators' expectations would be different depending on their level of spectating frequency.

Questionnaire

For viewing situations, spectators were given four choices about how they viewed the event: staying at one spot, following a pairing, moving around the holes, and other (Robinson & Carpenter, 2002). For attendance frequency, respondents were asked to indicate a number to a question, "How many JLPGA tournaments have you attended in the past five years including today?" Three groups were identified based on the collected data—new spectators (first time this tournament), light fans (2–4 times), and frequent fans (5 times or more).

Spectators were then asked to rate the perceived quality of six service elements: information signage, concessions, merchandise, restrooms, tournament staff, and shuttle bus operation. These service elements were garnered from previous studies (e.g., Lambrecht et al., 2009) as well as discussions with tournament officials, who believed these elements would likely relate to attendance satisfaction and wanted to include the ones that can be controlled and attempted to improve based on study results. Respondents were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very poor*; 7 = *very excellent*) to the item, "How would you rate quality of each service element?" Those who were not exposed to some of service elements could answer, "I do not know." Although each element could break down in subparts, such as cleanliness, convenient location, and sufficient numbers of restrooms, these elements were assessed from an overall perspective to determine a trend for individual elements.

Overall satisfaction with today's spectating experience was assessed with a single item adopted from Tsuji et al. (2007), and respondents were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) to the item, "Overall, I am satisfied with today's spectating experience." It is consistent with several previous studies in sport and leisure settings that utilized a single item to measure an individual's overall satisfaction (e.g., Tsuji et al., 2011).

Statistical Analysis

Multiple regression was employed to analyze the data with perceived quality of six service elements as the predictors and overall satisfaction with today's spectating experience as the outcome variable. With two grouping variables, which both had three subgroups, six separate regressions were performed. To assess the research questions, a beta statistic was used to determine which elements were more important for golf spectators to be satisfied with their spectating experience.

Results

A total of 432 questionnaires were distributed, of which 412 usable questionnaires were returned. The average age of the sample was 56.5, with 77.8% male. Regarding type of ticket, 48.5% were complimentary hospitality tickets, 34.8% obtained advance tickets, and 16.8% purchased at the event. According to the tournament officials (personal communication), these sample characteristics closely reflected the survey population (i.e., attendance of the day). As found in previous studies, the vast majority (88.2%) indicated they were golfers. Also, the vast majority indicated they only attend one day (95.1%) out of four-day tournament, which was similar to but higher than results from previous studies. In terms of perceived quality of service elements, tournament staff had the highest mean (4.49), followed by information signage (4.37), restrooms (4.36), merchandise (3.98), concession (3.67), and shuttle bus (3.19). Multicollinearity for six predictors was checked with correlation coefficients and VIF statistics, which did not detect serious problems influencing regression analyses.

Regarding viewing situations, overall satisfaction with the spectating experience was regressed on the perceived quality of six service elements to examine which service elements predicted overall satisfaction. The amount of variance explained for each segment was 40.6% for "staying at one spot" [Adjusted $R^2 = .367$, $F(6, 91) = 10.385$, $p < .01$], 53.7% for "following a pairing" [Adjusted $R^2 = .488$, $F(6, 56) = 10.835$, $p < .01$], and 43.8% for "moving randomly" [Adjusted $R^2 = .395$, $F(6, 78) = 10.127$, $p < .01$], respectively. Of the six service elements, two for "staying at one spot" (merchandise: $\beta = .224$; shuttle bus: $\beta = .193$), two for "following a pairing" (signage: $\beta = .274$; shuttle bus: $\beta = .447$), and two for "moving randomly" (staff: $\beta = .363$; shuttle bus: $\beta = .277$) were found to be significant in relation to overall satisfaction at the .05 alpha level (see Table 1). Thus, these service elements for each segment were found to be influential factors in explaining an individual's overall satisfaction with their spectating experience.

Regarding attendance frequency, overall satisfaction was regressed on the perceived quality of six service elements to determine which perceived quality of service elements predicted overall satisfaction. The amount of variance explained was 27.9% for "new fans" [Adjusted $R^2 = .225$, $F(6, 81) = 5.221$, $p < .01$], 46.4% for "light fans" [Adjusted $R^2 = .423$, $F(6, 79) = 11.383$, $p < .01$], and 45.6% for "frequent fans" [Adjusted $R^2 = .423$, $F(6, 97) = 13.566$, $p < .01$], respectively. Of the six service elements, one for "new fans" (shuttle bus: $\beta = .343$), two for "light fans" (signage: $\beta = .203$; shuttle bus: $\beta = .329$), and three for "frequent fans" (signage: $\beta = .298$; staff: $\beta = .227$; shuttle bus: $\beta = .279$) were found to be significant in relation to overall satisfaction at the .05 alpha level (see Table 2). Thus, these service elements for each subgroup were found to be influential factors in explaining an individual's overall satisfaction with their spectating experience. Table 3 shows a summary of important service elements by segments.

Table 1*Summary of Regression Analyses for Viewing Situation*

	One Spot (<i>n</i> = 98)			Followers (<i>n</i> = 63)			Movers (<i>n</i> = 85)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Info. Signage	.204	.107	.220	.344	.133	.274*	.067	.113	.072
Concession	-.010	.107	-.010	.036	.119	.031	.154	.104	.164
Merchandise	.262	.127	.224*	.265	.163	.177	-.157	.111	-.142
Restrooms	-.010	.099	-.001	.114	.110	.104	.052	.102	.054
Tournament Staff	.207	.133	.205	-.058	.136	-.049	.368	.130	.363**
Shuttle Bus	.175	.087	.193*	.434	.112	.447**	.219	.075	.277**
<i>R</i> ² (Adj. <i>R</i> ²)	.406 (.367)			.537 (.488)			.438 (.395)		

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 2*Summary of Regression Analyses for Attendance Frequency*

	New: 1st time (<i>n</i> = 88)			Light: 2–4 times (<i>n</i> = 86)			Frequent: 5 < (<i>n</i> = 104)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Info. Signage	.260	.138	.263	.190	.095	.203*	.329	.106	.298**
Concession	-.097	.122	-.104	.177	.114	.167	.122	.092	.120
Merchandise	.088	.137	.081	-.056	.144	-.043	.120	.118	.091
Restrooms	.183	.119	.194	.057	.098	.056	-.118	.091	-.114
Tournament Staff	-.091	.149	-.094	.210	.115	.212	.267	.120	.227*
Shuttle Bus	.307	.102	.343**	.290	.088	.329**	.233	.074	.279**
<i>R</i> ² (Adj. <i>R</i> ²)	.279 (.225)			.464 (.423)			.456 (.423)		

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3*Summary of Important Service Elements by Segments*

	Viewing Situation			Attendance Frequency		
	One Spot	Followers	Movers	New (1st time)	Light (2–4 times)	Frequent (5 <)
Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)	Shuttle Bus (+)
Merchandise (+)	Info. Signage (+)	Tournament Staff (+)			Info. Signage (+)	Info. Signage (+)
						Tournament Staff (+)

Note. (+) indicates positive association with overall satisfaction—high (low) in a perceived service element, high (low) in overall satisfaction.

Discussion

Live professional golf events are consumed much differently than other spectator sporting events, and results from this study reveal different elements of the service experience impact overall satisfaction depending on how the consumers watch the event and how often they attend events. Results from this study should provide insight into some of the nuances of customer satisfaction for a unique spectator experience.

Regardless of segment, shuttle bus service was the most important element of the service experience for professional golf consumers. Considering the perceived quality of this element was rated the lowest, this result may indicate attendance satisfaction for many spectators is low due to poor shuttle bus performance. After spending a long day at the event, which is another aspect unique to golf spectatorship (Watanabe et al., 2013), encountering poor bus operation could generate frustration and account for lower satisfaction and lower attendance. Although increasing the number of buses may be an option to improve service, it may not always be a solution as producing more traffic in limited spaces could pose additional problems. An alternative option could be to decentralize the timing for spectators to head to bus terminals, such as by displaying waiting time in timely manner on the tournament app or information boards at major spots in the course. By knowing waiting times, spectators could make educated decisions about when to head to the bus terminal to avoid long waits.

The importance of other elements of the service encounter differed by consumer segments. Consumers staying at one spot may not need much assistance or information as they do not move much. However, they may spend much time before or after the event purchasing tournament merchandise where they may evaluate this service encounter positively or negatively. Those following a specific pairing and those moving around randomly depended more on signage and tournament staff, respectively. For those followers wanting to stay with their favorite players as much time as possible, they only need exact locations such as restrooms, concession stands, and holes, so they can leave and come back at the pairing easily as they know where the pairing is playing while away. Thus, information signage could be the one where they get satisfied or frustrated. For random movers, they would have more needs related to seeking information such as holes various players are playing, concession stands where specific lines of products are selling, and event schedules to participate, of which they can ask tournament staff in person. Thus, tournament staff as a service element could be where they get satisfied or frustrated.

In terms of attendance frequency, only shuttle bus service influenced first-time consumers while informational signage and tournament staff influenced more frequent consumers. This finding suggests higher frequency consumers may have higher expectations for service. Considering attendance frequency tends to be much lower than for typical professional sport teams because there are fewer events in their area, so they attend tournaments fewer times. Golf tournament venues are vast and flexible settings in nature where course layouts and service locations (e.g., restroom, concession stands) are different for each venue. Given this, it is understandable that ways of getting information (information signage and tournament staff) are important for consumers. Recognizing easy and efficient ways to move around within the vast venue is important for spectators, so organizers may want to provide tutorial videos of the course layouts and service locations via the tournament app for spectators to check out prior to attending.

Overall, results were consistent with previous studies with various sport settings (e.g., Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010), reinforcing current knowledge regarding the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. More specifically, this study extends studies by Lambrecht et al. (2009) and Son et al. (2018) as different patterns of important service elements were observed, suggesting segmenting golf spectators based on the uniqueness of attending golf events can be meaningful. However, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, this study was limited to two types of segmentations. Because prior research (Hansen & Gauthier, 1993; Robinson & Carpenter, 2002; Robinson et al., 2004) has examined other unique golf attributes, such as day of event (weekday and weekend), type of event (men's and women's), and playing golf frequency and found those effects, future studies should also examine using these unique attributes as segmentation bases. Second, the current study examined six service elements selected from the literature and practitioner's insights. However, this list is not exhaustive and there may be other elements needing examination; therefore, future studies should take a step to develop a scale measuring service attributes that is specific to golf events. Third, there is a potential for sampling bias. The questionnaire needed to be administered after they finished spectating, and the shuttle bus terminal was considered the most reasonable location. Although shuttle bus service was found to be significant for all segments, these results could be skewed because respondents were engaged in the service at the time. Therefore, results need to be carefully interpreted. Finally, this current study collected data at a tournament in Japan, which could pose applicability of the findings to other countries. Based on the insights from industry experts (personal communication), we believe these findings can be also applicable to golf spectators in other countries as a profile of golf fans (e.g., higher average age, higher income, vast majority play golf themselves) is essentially similar. However, it is encouraged that future studies should be conducted with golf spectators in North America and other countries.

References

- Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57–71.
- Finnegan, C. A., Aicher, T. J., & Block, R. A. (2020). Repeat registrations of a running event: Applying customer base analysis. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 29(2), 94–108.
- Greenberg, M., & McDonald, S. S. (1989). Successful needs/benefits segmentation: A user's guide. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 6(3), 29–36.
- Greenwell, T. C., Fink, J. S., & Pastore, D. L. (2002). Perceptions of the service experience: Using demographic and psychographic variables to identify customer segments. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 11(4), 233–241.
- Hansen, H., & Gauthier, R. (1993). Spectators' views of LPGA golf event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 2(1), 17–25.
- Lambrecht, K. W., Kaefer, F., & Ramenofsky, S. D. (2009). Sportscape factors influencing spectator attendance and satisfaction at a professional golf association tournament. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 18(3), 165–172.

- Mano, H., & Oliver, R. L. (1993). Assessing the dimensionality and structure of the consumption experience: evaluation, feeling, and satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(3), 451–466.
- McDonald, M. A., Milne, G. R., & Hong, J. (2002). Motivational factors for evaluating sport spectator and participant markets. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 11(2), 100–113.
- Robinson, M. J., & Carpenter, J. R. (2002). The day of the week's impact on selected socio-demographic characteristics and consumption patterns of spectators at a LPGA event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 11(4), 242–247.
- Robinson, M. J., Trail, G. T., & Kwon, H. (2004). Motives and points of attachment of professional golf spectators. *Sport Management Review*, 7(2), 167–192.
- Son, J., Sung, J., & Choi, Y. (2018). Understanding service quality in satisfaction at Korean Ladies' Professional Golf Association Tournament: Gender differences of spectators. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 18(3), 1506–1513.
- Tsuji, Y., Bennett, G., & Dees, W. (2011). Exploring the effects of sportscape at a professional tennis tournament. *International Journal of Sport Management*, 12(1), 33–49.
- Tsuji, Y., Bennett, G., & Zhang, J. (2007). Consumer satisfaction with an action sports event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 16(4), 199–208.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Blodgett, J. G. (1996). The effect of servicescape on customers' behavioral intentions in leisure service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 10(6), 45–61.
- Wakefield, K. L., & Sloan, H. J. (1995). The effects of team loyalty and selected stadium factors on spectator attendance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9(2), 153–172.
- Watanabe, Y., & Zhang, J. J. (2019). To stay or not to stay? Japanese spectators' event-related perspectives on a professional golf tournament. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 24(4), 244–261.
- Watanabe, Y., Matsumoto, K., & Nogawa, H. (2013). Variables influencing spectators' desire to stay at a professional golf tournament in Japan. *Contemporary Management Research*, 9(3), 283–298.
- Yoshida, M., Heere, B., & Gorden, B. S. (2015). Predicting behavioral loyalty through community: Why other fans are more important than our own intentions, our satisfaction, and the team itself. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(3), 318–333.
- Yoshida, M., & James, F. D. (2010). Customer satisfaction with game and service experiences: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24(3), 338