

Golf Tourism

Simon and Louise Hudson

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Preface

Golf tourism has been valued at US\$20 billion with over 50 million golf tourists travelling the world to play on some of the estimated 32,000 courses. The industry has huge growth potential with 1000 new golf courses being built every year. There are 25 million golfers in North America, over 5 million in Europe, and participation in Asia is growing at an astronomical rate. Well-established golf tourism regions like Florida, California, Scotland, Ireland and Spain, are being challenged by emerging golf destinations such as Mexico, Egypt, Thailand, Malaysia and even China, where the number of golfers is growing by 30 percent a year. All of these golf destinations are competing for the affluent, high-value-adding tourists who generate significantly above-average per capita revenues for the destinations they frequent.

Surprisingly, there is no textbook that deals specifically with the golf tourism phenomenon. Given that golf represents the largest sports-related travel market, this is even more astonishing. We have books on the ski industry, marine tourism, sporting events, spa and health tourism, and adventure tourism, but no book, despite the availability of an increasing amount of research, dedicated to golf tourism. So this text will be a first, and we hope it will be of great value to both students and practitioners of golf tourism. With 40 up-to-date case studies from all over the world, covering all sectors of the golf industry, the book colourfully illustrates the key issues, opportunities and future challenges that lie ahead for those in the golf industry. The majority of these cases have been developed based on personal visits and in-depth interviews conducted by the authors. As well as offering numerous industry examples, the book provides comprehensive coverage of essential tourism management principles, such as understanding consumer behavior, planning issues, developing a marketing plan, and implementing the marketing mix. The text also includes sections on contemporary tourism issues such as integrated marketing communications, Internet marketing, and the environmental impacts of golf tourism.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the book and provides an initial insight into this growing area of tourism. It defines golf tourism, and discusses its evolution, describing the size and value of the market. The key players are introduced – the destinations, the golfers, golf hotels and resorts, golf real estate, golf attractions, golf retailers, golf tour operators, golf schools and golf tournaments. Three cases profile golf tourism in Wales, Malaysia and China, and another focuses on a US-based golf tour operator, The Wide World of Golf.

Chapter 2, *The Golf Tourist*, focuses on the tourists, who are predominately male, middle-aged or in their early retirement years, although this profile is changing with more females entering the sport. However, there are some variations worldwide, as there are differences in the way golf tourism is consumed, and so some of these variations are explained. Chapter 2 synthesizes the research that has attempted to segment the golf tourist market – one that is often segmented by golfographics or psychographics. It ends by looking at ten key trends in

consumer behaviour that are influencing golf tourism today. Cases here spotlight Legend Golf and Safari Resort in South Africa, the golf experience in Japan, Sandals Resorts Golf School in Jamaica, and golfer typologies in Scotland.

Chapter 3 looks at the *Golf Tourism Product*, which primarily consists of golf tours and packages, the courses themselves, and the hotels and resorts serving the golf tourists. An increasing number of golf tourists are also booking into golf schools and visiting golfing attractions, so these are also discussed here. There are also a number of golfing museums around the world, and the chapter highlights some of these attractions. The chapter is supported by cases on Disney's Celebration golf course, PGA Tour Golf Experiences, the Ho Chi Minh Golf Trail in Vietnam, and golf tourism at Fairmont Hotels & Resorts.

Chapter 4, *Planning for Golf Tourism*, discusses the critical importance of planning for the sustainability of golf course developments. It focuses on the initiatives and solutions most frequently applied in planning. A section on the planning process is followed by an analysis of golf course types and layout options. There are a number of design considerations in the planning and development of courses and these are discussed in turn, followed by a final section on the costs and development problems that might arise during the planning process. Cases here focus on golf tourism planning in Australia, Mexico and Canada.

Chapter 5, *The Management of Golf Tourism*, explores the various management structures in golf clubs and resorts, as well highlighting the important operational considerations for golf club managers, such as staffing, pro shops, golf cart fleets, maintenance and course management, customer service, and risk management. Supporting cases here look at Trump National Los Angeles, supposedly the most expensive course ever built; how Troon Golf manages ailing golf clubs; and key management issues for two different golf clubs in Canada and New Zealand.

The Marketing of Golf Tourism is the topic for Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 investigates the marketing planning process, the key factors determining pricing decisions, key product decisions, and the distribution strategies available to the industry. Cases here look at the successful Homecoming Scotland Campaign, how the Sahara is repositioning for golf tourism, the New Mexico Golf Tourism Alliance, and the emergence of golf tourism in Kashmir. Chapter 7 focuses on integrated marketing communications and the implementation of the marketing mix. It outlines the key principles of advertising, promotions, public relations, selling and marketing, and delves into uses of the Internet for golf tourism industry marketers. Cases highlight how Kiawah Island Golf Resort has embraced social media, how the Kiwi Challenge has put New Zealand's North Coast on the international golf map, why North Carolina developed an interactive golf travel website, and how Stoke Park Club has leveraged its association with James Bond.

Chapter 8 on *Golf Events* examines the contribution that golf events – and their high-profile competitors – can make to the overall golf industry economy. It begins by looking at the different types of golf events around the world, then at the spectators that attend them. The hosting of golf events is the subject of the next part, which considers issues related to planning, marketing and operations. It concludes with a section on the impact of golf events. Cases here include a

look at the draw of Tiger Woods, how Abu Dhabi uses golf events to boost tourism, the experience of Korea hosting an international PGA Tour event, and Mallorca's experience in hosting the European Senior Open in 2009.

The increasing emphasis on sustainability has important implications for the golf industry, and Chapter 9, *The Impacts of Golf Tourism*, centres on the three pillars of sustainability – the economy, the environment and society. In the past, golf tourism was encouraged for its economic benefits with little consideration for the effects on the environment and host societies. But this is beginning to change. For golf tourism to be sustainable, it is vital that its impacts are understood, so that they can be incorporated into planning and management. To highlight these issues, Chapter 9 includes cases on Justin Timberlake's new 'green' golf course, how golf resorts in Las Vegas are selling grass back to the desert to reduce their footprint, and environmental sustainability in Portugal's Algarve area. Another case looks at the economic impact of the industry in South Carolina.

The Future is discussed in Chapter 10, particularly three important themes impacting the outlook for golf tourism: the internationalization of golf and its economy, social access to participation, and environmental issues. Cases in this chapter take a look at Heli Golf in the Canadian Rockies, golf tourism in New Europe, how Alberta's Stewart Creek is juggling the needs of people and wildlife, and how junior golf is the key to the future of the golf industry.

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