



## Golfers' Golf Course Attribute Preferences and Perception of Impacts of Golf Course Development Between Golfers and Local Residents: A Case of Thana City Golf and Sports Club, Bangkok, Thailand

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### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาความถี่ในการเล่นกอล์ฟที่เกี่ยวข้องกับลักษณะทางชีวสังคม คุณลักษณะของนักกอล์ฟ และศึกษา ลักษณะของสนามกอล์ฟที่มีผลต่อความพึงพอใจ ของผู้เล่นกอล์ฟในสนามกอล์ฟธานีตี๋กอล์ฟแอนด์สปอร์ตคลับตลอดจนศึกษา ผลกระทบของการพัฒนาสนามกอล์ฟในทัศนะของนักกอล์ฟและประชาชนในท้องถิ่นเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยการแจกแบบสอบถามจำนวน 316 ชุดให้นักกอล์ฟ และประชาชนในท้องถิ่นผลการศึกษาพบว่าคุณภาพและการบริการของสนามกอล์ฟเป็นคุณลักษณะที่สำคัญ ที่มีผลต่อความพึงพอใจของนักกอล์ฟ นักกอล์ฟรับทราบผลกระทบทางเศรษฐกิจในเชิงบวก ในขณะที่ประชาชนในท้องถิ่นมีความกังวล เกี่ยวกับผลกระทบทางสังคมและสิ่งแวดล้อมเชิงลบของการพัฒนาสนามกอล์ฟ ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับทีมผู้บริหารสนามกอล์ฟ คือ การปรับปรุงและเน้นคุณลักษณะที่สำคัญของสนามกอล์ฟที่นักกอล์ฟให้ความสำคัญมาก และหน่วยงานการท่องเที่ยว โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง การท่องเที่ยวแห่งประเทศไทย (ททท.) ควรพิจารณาเกี่ยวกับประโยชน์และความสนใจของประชาชนในท้องถิ่นให้มาก และควรหลีกเลี่ยง ความขัดแย้งที่เกิดจากผลกระทบด้านลบของการพัฒนาสนามกอล์ฟ

**คำสำคัญ :** กีฬากอล์ฟและนักกอล์ฟ / สโมสรกอล์ฟและสโมสรกีฬา / นักกอล์ฟและประชาชนในท้องถิ่น

### ABSTRACT

This study focused on the role of golfers' golfing frequency in relation with selected golfers' demographic and golf graphic information, as well as their influence on the golf course attributes preferences in Thana City Golf & Sports Club. The impacts of golf course development as perceived by golfers and local residents were also investigated. A quantitative survey involving a set of 316 questionnaires were distributed equally among golfers and local residents. The findings of the study showed that golf course's quality and services are the key golf course attributes. The study also observes that golfers' acknowledged the positive economic impacts, while local residents are concerned more about the negative socio-environmental impacts of golf course development. The recommendations for the golf course management team for major improvements be focused on the key golf course attributes that golfers weigh with high importance. The golf tourism authorities especially TAT should consider more about local residents' benefits and interests, and avoid the conflicts caused by the negative impacts of golf course development.

**Keywords :** Golf and golfer / golf club and sports club / golfer and local resident



## 1. Introduction

Golfing is a dynamic and growing activity for tourists globally, if marketed and developed wisely, will become a very successful and profitable niche tourism product. Sports tourism as a relatively new concept has gained increasing attention during mid-1990, and golfing as one of the most popular sports tourism in Thailand has become the focus of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Thailand is absolutely off and running as Asia's golf hub as claimed by TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2010).

Golf 20/20 (2011) has classified golfers based on their golfing frequency (Hennessey, MacDonald & MacEachern, 2008), which is the rounds of golf played per year, as avid golfers (more than 25 rounds), core golfers (7-24 rounds), occasional golfers (1-7 rounds) and former golfers (any person played at one time). To simplify the category, this research uses avid golfers, core golfers and occasional golfers.

Thana City Golf & Sports Club is located 25 minutes from downtown Bangkok. This golf course was built in 1993 and designed by the legendary Greg Norman (Thana City Golf and Sports Club, 2011). Its provision of quality facilities and services attract both Thai and international golfers every year. There are more than 10 similar level of golf courses in Bangkok. Golfers who come here, therefore, can be used to represent the general opinions of most of the golfers in Bangkok.

Despite golf being a fast growing sport tourism product and one of the main contributors in generating the country's tourism revenue, there are impacts brought about by the golf tourism development in Thailand. In this study, the focus is given to the three aspects of impacts from golf course development: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. It has been widely acknowledged that golf course development attracted high-end golfers, contributed to the national income and created job opportunities for the local community. However, on the other hand, the costs on environment and local community are significant too. Golf course uses a substantial amount of land, causes water scarcity,

and applies different types of chemicals to maintain the quality of greens and tees which consequently have the potential threat to the environment, as well as human health.

Golf course attributes are invariably as the pull factors for golfers. The present study aims to investigate: How do the golfers' demographics and golfographics relate to golf course attribute preference? And how do golfers and local residents differ in their perceptions toward impacts of golf course development?

### 1.1 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to shed some light on the influences of various personal and golf-related characteristics and general behavior of golfers on their choice in choosing a golf course, and to unpack different discourses involved in the sustainable development of golf course between golfers and local residents.

## 2. Methodology/ Experimental Design

This study designed two sets of self-administered questionnaire for both golfers and local residents distributed at the Thana City Golf and Sports Club and the Nouvelle Condominium located inside Thana City neighborhood. A total of 316 questionnaires were returned with valid information for further analysis.

### 2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was written in The Thai and English language, for both Thai and international golfers. Questionnaire for golfers was designed in three parts: section I containing 16 items on golf course attributes, section II containing 14 statements on impacts of golf course development and section III containing 14 questions carrying golfers' demographic and golf graphic information, such as age, occupation, motivation, expenditure, and golfing frequency. The questionnaire for local residents contained 14 statements on impacts of golf course development. The first section measured the importance of golf course attributes weighed by the golfers in choosing



a golf course on a 5 - point Likert Scale; where 5 – extremely important, 4 – fairly important, 3 – neither or nor important, 2 – not so important, 1 – not at all important. The second section measured the golfer and local residents’ opinion on impacts of golf course development also on a 5 - point Likert Scale; where 5 - strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 2 – disagree, 1 – strongly disagree.

A pretest was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the survey instrument by distributing 30 questionnaires to the golfers at Thana City Golf and Sports Club. Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient on golf course attribute ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ) and impacts of golf course development ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ) were considered as acceptable as they were greater than 0.70.

## 2.2 Hypothesis

In this research, golfing frequency, golfers and local residents are the independent variables. Age, occupation, motivation, and expenditure are the moderating variables. Importance of golf course attributes and perception of impacts of golf course development are the dependent variables.

## 2.3 Procedure

The researchers personally visited Thana City Golf and Sports Club and distributed 200 questionnaires to the golfers and 200 questionnaires to the local residents in October 2011. But due to the flood crisis in major areas in Bangkok, a total of 316 questionnaires were returned with completed information for analysis.

## 2.4 Method of analysis

Chi-square test was applied to explore the association between the golfing frequency and golfers’ age, occupation, motivation and expenditure. One-way ANOVA was applied to investigate the difference in golf course attributes preferences in terms of golfers’ age, occupation, and expenditure. And Independent sample t-test was applied to observe the difference in golf course attribute preferences, in terms of golfers’ motivation, as well as the different opinions on impacts of golf course development between golfers and local residents.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Demographic and golfographic profiles and trip characteristics of the golfers

Generally the respondents were Thai, males, aged 50-59 years, with the occupation of business, who had played golf for less than 10 years and played more than 25 rounds per year. They came in a group of 2-4 persons, mainly with their friends, and played golf as their primary purpose of the trip. They preferred morning round, spent less than 5,000 baht, and only played for one day. They liked to make reservation in advance and their main sources of information about golf course were the recommendation from friends and relatives.

### 3.2 Golf course attribute preferences

Table 1 below summarized the mean score of importance level of each golf course attribute from highest to the lowest. The top three attributes were condition of the greens, course cleanliness and reasonable price, while the bottom three were restaurant, pro shop, and accommodation.

**Table 1** Importance of Golf Course Attributes (nG = 158)

No.	Golf Course Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Greens	4.43	0.832
2	Cleanliness	4.30	0.810
3	Price	4.29	0.926
4	Fairways	4.20	0.956
5	Hospitality	4.16	0.916
6	Pace of Play	4.09	0.862
7	Location	4.03	1.055
8	Landscape	3.89	1.111
9	Tee-off Time	3.88	1.238
10	Climate	3.81	1.035
11	Recommendation	3.61	0.936
12	Trying New Course	3.47	1.149
13	Difficulty	3.45	1.239
14	Restaurant	3.35	1.291
15	Pro Shop	2.51	1.150
16	Accommodation	2.42	1.196

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important (2) not so important, (1) not at all important

### 3.3 Impacts of golf course development

From Table 2 below, it can be found that golfers and local residents stated different opinions on certain impacts of golf course development. The



top three statements of the impacts acknowledged by golfers were job creation, Thailand's image and economic contribution; while the top three concerned by local residents were land and water usage and pollution.

**Table 2** Perception of Impacts of Golf Course Development between Golfers and Local Residents

No	Impact of Golf Course Development	n <sub>G</sub> = 158		n <sub>LR</sub> = 158	
		Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
1	Tourist arrivals	4.09	0.913	2.88	0.952
2	Economic contribution	4.23	0.781	3.54	0.683
3	Tourist season	4.08	0.798	3.47	0.962
4	Derelict lands	3.82	0.833	2.82	0.909
5	High-end tourist	3.97	0.913	4.03	0.524
6	Recreation facility	4.08	0.762	3.53	0.78
7	Thailand's image	4.27	0.801	3.97	0.652
8	Job creation	4.35	0.739	4.25	0.713
9	Land usage	3.83	0.952	4.45	0.948
10	Land speculation	3.89	0.984	3.74	0.838
11	Water usage	4.20	0.920	4.44	0.691
12	Ecology	3.21	1.237	3.97	1.108
13	Pollution	3.66	1.039	4.38	0.683
14	Local displacement	3.23	1.163	3.65	0.902

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important (2) not so important, (1) not at all important  
n<sub>G</sub>: Golfers, n<sub>LR</sub>: Local Resident, Std.: Std. Deviation

### 3.4 Hypotheses 1 – 4: Associations between golfers' golfing frequency and their age, occupation, motivation and expenditure

Based on the results of Chi-square test, there were associations between golfers' golfing frequency and their age ( $\chi^2 = 38.615$ ,  $p < .01$ ), occupation ( $\chi^2 = 39.814$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and motivation ( $\chi^2 = 28.947$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not with expenditure. It can be concluded that, as the golfers grow older their frequency to play golf also increased; golfers with the occupation in business and professionals had higher tendency to play golf than golfers with other occupations; golfers

who came to play golf predominantly were the one who play more frequently as compared to those who primarily did not visit to play golf.

### 3.5 Hypotheses 5 – 8 : Golfers' golf course attribute preferences in terms of age, occupation, motivation and expenditure

From the ANOVA testing result (see Table 3), it was concluded there were differences in eleven golf course attributes preferences in terms of golfers' age. Those eleven attributes were trying new course ( $p < .05$ ), condition of fairways ( $p < .01$ ), condition of greens ( $p < .01$ ), location/accessibility ( $p < .01$ ), difficulty of the course ( $p < .05$ ), tee-off time ( $p < .01$ ), pace of play ( $p < .05$ ), climate ( $p < .05$ ), hospitality ( $p < .01$ ), accommodation ( $p < .01$ ) and pro shop ( $p < .01$ ).

**Table 3** Difference of Golf Course Attribute Preferences in terms of Golfers' Age (nG = 158)

Golf Course Attribute	F	Sig.
Trying new course	2.902	0.024*
Fairways	5.762	0.000**
Greens	8.997	0.000**
Cleanliness	1.799	0.132
Price	1.135	0.342
Location	3.970	0.004**
Difficulty	2.571	0.040*
Tee-off time	6.503	0.000**
Pace of play	2.891	0.024*
Landscape	1.250	0.292
Climate	2.767	0.029*
Recommendation	1.108	0.335
Hospitality	6.203	0.000**
Restaurant	0.290	0.884*
Accommodation	3.810	0.006**
Shop	7.181	0.000**

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important (2) not so important, (1) not at all important  
\* Significant at the .05 level.  
\*\* Significant at the .01 level.

Based on the results of Post Hoc test, it can be concluded that younger golfers look for new and challenging games, at the same time they didn't care much for the condition of the greens and fairways. Golfers aged above 50 years concerned the location



of the golf course. Golfers aged above 40 have expressed their concern about the appropriate tee-off time, in order to fit with their schedule, they also liked to play a smooth game with fast pace of play. Golfers aged 50-59 weighed climate with higher importance than other age groups. Accommodation was an important attributes of golf course to golfers aged 25-30 years and 50-59 years, they would like to stay overnight at the golf course. Availability of pro shop was only important to golfers aged less than 39 years, they would like to purchase something from the pro shop, such as golf equipments.

Table 4 summarizes the differences in ten golf course attributes preferences in terms of golfers' occupation. Those ten attributes were trying new course ( $p < .01$ ), condition of the fairways ( $p < .01$ ), condition of the greens ( $p < .01$ ), cleanliness of the course ( $p < .01$ ), location/accessibility ( $p < .05$ ), difficulty of the course ( $p < .05$ ), tee-off time ( $p < .01$ ), climate ( $p < .01$ ), accommodation ( $p < .01$ ), and pro shop ( $p < .01$ ).

**Table 4** Difference of Golf Course Attribute Preferences in terms of Golfers' Occupation (nG = 158)

Golf Course Attribute	F	Sig.
Trying New Course	4.094	0.001**
Fairways	4.039	0.001**
Greens	6.404	0.000**
Cleanliness	4.641	0.000**
Price	1.769	0.109
Location	2.873	0.011*
Difficulty	2.362	0.033*
Tee-off Time	9.897	0.000**
Pace of Play	1.011	0.420
Landscape	0.876	0.514
Climate	3.288	0.005**
Recommendation	1.949	0.077
Hospitality	1.133	0.346
Restaurant	0.324	0.923
Accommodation	3.324	0.004**
Shop	3.414	0.003**

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important (2) not so important, (1) not at all important

\* Significant at the .05 level.

\*\* Significant at the .01 level.

Based on Post Hoc test, the results showed that, compared with housewives and professionals, other golfers seemed to care more about the novelty, would like to try new course which they had never played before. Retirees, professionals, businessmen, company employees and government officers weighed condition of the greens and fairways and cleanliness of the course more importantly. Professionals, company employees and businessmen concerned more about the location of the course than students, housewives and retirees, because they were the one still under employment, they may have limited time compared with other unemployed golfers, they liked the course in the convenient location to save time and energy. Businessmen and company employees cared more about the difficulty of the course; they would like to challenge themselves. Compared with housewives and students, the rest of the golfers with other types of occupation weighed pace of play and climate with higher importance. Compared with retirees and professionals, students, housewives, businessmen and company employee would like to stay overnight at the golf course. Students, housewives, professionals, businessmen and company employees seemed keen to spend money at the pro shop, when compared with government officers and retirees.

Table 5 below shows the differences in nine golf course attribute preferences between golfers' two different types of motivation. The nine attributes were trying new course ( $p < .05$ ), condition of the greens ( $p < .05$ ), cleanliness of the course ( $p < .01$ ), reasonable fee/price ( $p < .01$ ), location/accessibility ( $p < .05$ ), difficulty of the course ( $p < .01$ ), tee-off time ( $p < .05$ ), hospitality ( $p < .05$ ), and restaurant ( $p < .05$ ).



**Table 5** Independent Sample t-test for Importance of Golf Course Attribute in terms of Golfers' Motivation (nG = 158)

Golf Course Attribute	Sig. (2-tailed)
Trying New Course	0.048*
Fairways	0.788
Greens	0.032*
Cleanliness	0.000**
Price	0.005**
Location	0.039*
Difficulty	0.001**
Tee-off Time	0.021*
Pace of Play	0.114
Landscape	0.321
Climate	0.175
Recommendation	0.560
Hospitality	0.025*
Restaurant	0.017*
Accommodation	0.626
Shop	0.297

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important, (2) not so important, (1) not at all important

\* Significant at the .05 level.

\*\* Significant at the .01 level.

The results of the means comparison showed that golfers who predominantly came to play golf weighed novelty, condition of the greens, course cleanliness, reasonable price, location, difficulty of the course, tee-off time and hospitality with higher importance level compared with golfers who came not only to play golf. But for golfers who came not only for golf, the restaurant is more importantly.

Table 6 below illustrated the differences of seven golf course attribute preferences in terms of golfers' expenditure. Those seven attributes were condition of greens ( $p < .05$ ), cleanliness of the course ( $p < .01$ ), reasonable fee/price ( $p < .05$ ), difficulty of the course ( $p < .05$ ), pace of play ( $p < .01$ ), landscape ( $p < .05$ ), and recommendation ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 6** Difference of Golf Course Attribute Preferences in terms of Golfers' Expenditure (nG = 158)

Golf Course Attribute	F	Sig.
Trying New course	1.379	0.235
Fairways	1.373	0.238
Greens	2.816	0.018*
Cleanliness	3.704	0.003**
Price	2.637	0.026*
Location	1.526	0.185
Difficulty	3.063	0.012*
Tee-off Time	0.197	0.963
Pace	5.531	0.000**
Landscape	2.669	0.024*
Climate	1.314	0.261
Recommendation	2.324	0.046*
Hospitality	0.500	0.776
Restaurant	1.648	0.151
Accommodation	0.972	0.437
Shop	1.678	0.143

Note: (5) extremely important, (4) fairly important, (3) neither or nor important, (2) not so important, (1) not at all important

\* Significant at the .05 level.

\*\* Significant at the .01 level.

Based on the Post Hoc test, the results showed that compared with golfers who spent less than 1,000 baht, the golfers with higher spending weighed condition of the greens and course cleanliness more importantly. Golfers who spent less than 5,000 baht were price sensitive. Golfers who spent less than 1,000 baht were more interested in difficulty of the course. Golfers who spent more than 1,000 baht weighed pace of play with higher importance than the rest of the golfers, they didn't want to wait for long time while playing. Golfers who spent 5,000-10,000 baht would like to enjoy the golfing experience with better landscape. Lastly, golfers who spent 5,000-15,000 baht seemed to concern more about the word of mouth recommendation.

### 3.6 Hypothesis 9: Perceptions of impacts of golf course development between golfers and local residents





The test results showed the different opinions of golfers and local residents on eleven statements of impacts of golf course development (Table 7). The eleven statement of impacts were tourist arrivals ( $p < .01$ ), economic contribution ( $p < .01$ ), tourist season ( $p < .01$ ), derelict land ( $p < .01$ ), recreational facility ( $p < .01$ ), image ( $p < .01$ ) land usage ( $p < .01$ ), water usage ( $p < .01$ ), ecology ( $p < .01$ ), pollution ( $p < .01$ ), and local displacement ( $p < .01$ ).

**Table 7** Independent Sample t test for Perception of Golf Course Development between Golfers and Local Residents (nG = 158)

Perception of Golf Course Development	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tourist Arrivals	0.000**
Economic	0.000**
Season	0.000**
Derelict Land	0.000**
High-end Tourist	0.364
Recreational Facility	0.000**
Image	0.001**
Jobs	0.266
Land Usage	0.000**
Land Speculation	0.151
Water Usage	0.006**
Ecology	0.000**
Pollution	0.000**
Local Displacement	0.001**

Note: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree

\*\* Significant at the .01 level.

From the means comparison between golfers and local residents, golfers acknowledged more about the positive economic impacts such as tourist arrivals, economic contribution, tourist season, derelict land, recreation facility, and Thailand's image. While local residents concerned more about the negative socio-environmental impacts such as land and water usage, ecology, pollution and local displacement.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study reinforced golfing frequency can be a very useful segmentation tool in golf market. There were significant differences in importance of the golf course attributes in terms of golfers' age, occupation, motivation and expenditure. There were significant differences in the perception of impact of the golf course development between golfers and local residents. In general, golfers would like to have a first class golfing experience by enjoying better condition of the course, such as the greens, fairways, course cleanliness; being able to use warm hospitality; there should be appropriate tee-off time, with smooth flow of the game and fast pace of play; the course was better at the convenient location, with beautiful landscape and friendly climate. The difficulty and novelty of the course, restaurant, accommodation and pro shop were not necessarily important. More than half of the respondents (both golfers and locals) affirmed most of the positive and negative impacts of golf course development, such as the usage of substantial amount of water and land, job creation, improving Thailand's image, pollution, attracting high-end tourists, economic contribution, land speculation, adding recreation facility, lengthening tourists' season, and disrupting eco-system. These findings were in accordance with the studies of Markwick (2000), there were different, competing interests involved in the development of golf course; and with Fredline (2006) that the tourists' enjoyment of the sports activities, may affect local residents' daily life, the nature of golf course development was complex.

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