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**Exploring perceptions for Cyprus as a sustainable golf destination: Motivational
and attitudinal orientations of golf tourists**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of golf tourists in Cyprus about their golf holiday experience and the sustainable character of golf practices through a series of statements that examines their motivation for traveling to Cyprus and the corresponding attributes of the Cypriot golf tourist product that they experienced. A survey was administered in three golf courses on the island (n=103). Results show that the major motives of golf tourists to visit Cyprus include the island's natural characteristics, the friendly environment and the unique experience while accompanying friends. Furthermore, their perceptions concern elements regarding their social interaction, environment, and relaxation. Specifically, respondents who consider golf an important motive for travelling to Cyprus and those who agree that golf in Cyprus offers opportunities with ideal conditions are more satisfied than those who do not. The findings

of this study provide insight for the Cypriot tourism policy-makers to understand the perceptions of golf tourists and hence to design accordingly the golf tourism product of Cyprus. Also, an integrative model is proposed for examining the motivation and perceptions of golf tourists in relation to attributes that can shape meaningful experiences and the sustainable development of golf tourism. It is suggested that this line of inquiry in conjunction with qualitative approaches can be a useful perspective in examining comprehensively the meaning and shaping of sport tourist experiences within a sustainability context.

Key words: perceptions, golf tourism, motivation, attributes, sustainability, sport tourist experiences, self-perception

Introduction

The interaction between sport and tourism has been examined from many perspectives such as economic, environmental, social, cultural, and so on (i.e., Chalip, 2010; Downward, 2005; Gammon and Ramshaw, 2007; Gibson, 1998, 2006; Higham, 2005; Higham and Hinch, 2009; Hinch and Higham, 2004; Weed, 2009; Weed and Bull, 2009; Ziakas and Costa, 2010). Even though this burgeoning literature attempts to understand the manifold dimensions of the sport tourism phenomenon, the examination of sport tourists' experiences has not been addressed thoroughly. This is due to the predominant focus on merely profiling and describing rather than understanding sport tourists' behavior (Gibson, 2004; Weed, 2006). Such an understanding can be assisted by explaining the underlying perceptions, motivations and attitudes of sport tourists. This line of inquiry could contribute to a holistic understanding of sport tourism experiences, hence, deriving sound implications for the sustainable management/marketing of sport tourism types and products.

In this regard, an important subset market of sport tourism is golf, which by its very nature depends largely on the adoption of sustainable management practices. In fact, with almost 60 million golfers and 32,000 golf courses in 140 countries around the globe, golf constitutes a significant tourism activity (Hudson and Hudson, 2010; Readman, 2003). Golf tourists are generally a desirable segment for a destination since they spend more on their vacations in comparison with leisure tourists, are repeat visitors, and generally come from higher-spending groups (Correia et al., 2007; Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008). These characteristics make golf tourism an up-market sophisticated tourist product, which emphasizes on quality and can enhance the image of a destination (Markwick, 2000). Consequently, governments and regional authorities around the globe incorporate golf into their plans as a main form of tourism development.

Likewise, since the late 1980s, up-market tourist and residential golf resorts have been spreading in the environmentally sensitive and already stressed coastal Mediterranean Europe seeking to upgrade the tourism product of these countries, curb seasonality, solve fiscal deficit problems and counterbalance the decline of agriculture (Barke and Towner, 2004; Barros et al., 2010; Briassoulis, 2007; Ioannides and Holcomb, 2003; Markwick, 2000; Papatheodorou, 2004). Following this trend, the tourism policy in Cyprus has capitalized on golf tourism as an alternative form of development in order to counterbalance the dominant mass tourism model (that used to exist on the island since 1960s) but during the last decade is not viable anymore (Archontides, 2007). This generated a series of problems such as increased seasonality, overdependence on certain tourist markets (i.e. British), and partial development on mostly coastal areas (Sharpley, 2002).

In general, there is an ongoing debate about the relationship of golf with the environment. On the one hand, there is evidence that golf has adopted organizational citizenship practices and become an environmentally friendly sport (Husin et al., 2012; Limehouse et al., 2010). On the other hand, it is argued that the growth of golf tourism engenders considerable risks to the sustainable development of destinations, and hence, raises serious controversies in local communities between proponents of golf's beneficial effects on tourism and economy and opponents who call attention to the adverse environmental, economic and socio-cultural consequences of golf (Boukas et al. 2012; Briassoulis, 2007, 2010, 2011; Davis and Morais, 2004; Neo, 2010; Palmer, 2004; Perkins et al., 2010; Wheeler and Nauright, 2006). As Perkins et al. (2010) point out, despite the contentious nature of golf tourism, which is characterized by oversupply, social exclusionism/displacement, environmental resource over-consumption, pollution and degradation as well as expansionist developmental politics overlooking social justice and equal distribution of benefits, the game has matured worldwide embodying a constellation of economic practices and social issues. Nonetheless, rather than merely accounting the supporting and opposing views on golf tourism, the challenging issue is the identification of appropriate patterns of public perceptions, conditions, and management practices/systems (Briassoulis, 2007; Woodside, 2009) that can facilitate golf tourism's contribution to the sustainable development of destinations. To address this issue, it is essential to examine the perceptions and attitudes of golf tourists and/or other stakeholders that could guide a changing perceptual mindset for enabling the adoption of sustainable management practices in golf tourism.

Nonetheless, there has been limited research on examining the image, perceptions, and attitudes of golfers and/or other stakeholders for golf courses, golf destinations, and golf tourism (Briassoulis, 2010) with most studies focusing on residents' attitudes toward golf courses (e.g., Andriotis, 2008; Hernandez, et al., 1996). What remains largely unexplored is the meaning and understanding of golf tourists' experiences who either as active players (Gibson and Pennington-Gray, 2005) or spectators (Harris et al., 2012) develop specific behaviors based on their perceived images about golf and golf destinations. From this standpoint, it is heuristically useful to examine perceptions of players and spectators in terms of fostering golf as a sustainable form of tourism.

On these grounds, the aim of the paper is to examine and explain the perceptions of golf tourists for Cyprus as a sustainable golf destination by shedding light on their motivational and attitudinal orientations. Specifically, the paper first explores the reasons golf tourists chose Cyprus as a golf destination. Then, it seeks a deeper understanding of their perceptions and behaviors towards golf on the island as they relate to their beliefs regarding a series of statements about golf as an experience. On this basis, the practical and theoretical implications of the study are discussed. As such, the study provides insight for the Cypriot tourism policy to understand the perceptions of golf tourists, and take measures to meet their expectations and needs, and hence, to design accordingly the golf tourism product of Cyprus. Finally, the study proposes a model that integrates the motivation and perceptions of golf tourists with a series of attributes that shape meaningful experiences and correspond to the sustainable character of golf tourism.

Golf as a form of tourism development and its impacts

Golf tourism constitutes a major subset of sport tourism while also representing a form of special interest tourism or niche tourism (Robinson and Novelli, 2005) depending on the perspective that this tourist activity is approached. Independently from the perspective adopted, golf tourism is considered as the largest sports-travel market (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008). It was estimated in 2000 that golfers spend almost EUR 14.5 million per year (Markwick, 2000). Since then there has been a steady increase in golf tourist flows and spending. According to Rees (2008), the 5 to 10 per cent of approximately 59 million golfers travel overseas annually to participate in golf activities. In this respect, the international scale of the golf tourism market is between 2.9 and 5.9 million, making golf tourism as one of the most important markets within the tourism industry.

The impacts of golf for a destination are multifaceted bearing both positive and negative consequences. As Hudson and Hudson (2010) highlight, golf tourism is part of a whole economy that name 'the golf economy', which has clusters/sub-sectors. According to the authors, the golf economy clusters include the core industries: (a) golf facility operations, (b) golf course capital investment, (c) golf supplies, and (d) media tournaments, associations and charities, as well as the enabled industries: (a) hospitality and tourism, and (b) real estate. These sub-sectors are interconnected and provide directly and indirectly to a place's employment and economy (Hudson and Hudson, 2010).

In terms of tourism, golf may generate significant positive impacts for destinations. Butler (2005) suggests that golf tourism can contribute positively to a destination's growth and prosperity since the extensive appeal and heritage of golf can

make a place into a distinctive golf destination like St. Andrews in Scotland. As Markwick (2000) supports, golf tourism can minimize the seasonality of many 'warm' destinations such as Malta. In this respect, golf lengthens the tourist season because it attracts those golfers who cannot play golf during the winter months in northern countries, to the south where the environment and the weather conditions are much milder and favorable for enjoying golf holidays. Additionally, Palmer (2004) argues that golf tourism can be developed on degraded/derelict spaces that it is challenging to develop other tourist activities, and thus contributes to their revitalization. Arguably, golf tourism can enrich and diversify the tourism product of a destination by adding new activities, facilities and product/service amenities that ultimately enhance the destination's image and competitiveness (Markwick, 2000; Palmer, 2004).

Conversely, there are also significant negative impacts deriving from golf tourism, which have been publicized widely (Bramwell, 2004; Farrally et al., 2003; Pearce, 1993; Platt, 1994; Pleumarom, 1992; Schwanke, 1997; Tatnall, 1991; Terman, 1997; Warnken et al., 2001). These comprise a range of consequences including over-consumption of scarce resources (i.e., land, water, soil, energy), soil and water pollution, ecosystem degradation, socio-economic inequalities and induced, often unplanned, tourism and residential development (Briassoulis, 2002, 2007). As Wheeler and Nauright (2006) point out, the detrimental effects associated with golf course development and operation concern the clearing of natural vegetation, deforestation, destruction of natural landscapes and habitats and changes in local topography and hydrology, while the use of chemicals (i.e., fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and fungicides) on golf courses may pose a health risk to humans and wildlife.

According to Warnken et al. (2001), the most deleterious impacts of golf courses are the pollution of ground and surface waters from nutrients and pesticides (Balogh et al., 1992). On average, a contemporary golf course needs application of around 200 kg nitrogen/ha/yr and 40 kg phosphate/ha/yr (Petrovic, 1990), and 2.2 kg active ingredient (a.i.) of pesticide ha/yr (Kendall et al., 1992). Moreover, golf course construction can alter the hydrology and topography of an area (Winter and Dillon, 2005). Golf courses are demanding and water issues are a huge problem for the future of golf. As Dodson (2005, p.123) argues:

‘Water is the most significant issue facing the future of golf. As populations grow and the demands on clean, abundant water become greater, everyone and every agency in the United States is focused on water conservation and water quality management’

In terms of water needs, De Stefano (2004) suggests that the average tourist in Spain consumes 440 liters of water per day; this value increases to 880 liters if swimming pools and golf courses exist (Gössling, 2002). Tourist and residential water use may reach 850 liters per person per day during the summer (De Stefano, 2004; Essex et al., 2004). Golf courses may consume up to 10,000 cubic meters per hectare per year, the equivalent consumption of 12,000 people (Briassoulis, 2002; De Stefano, 2004; Mastny, 2001). The problems become more pressing during the summer months where the

increased temperatures and droughts are a common phenomenon especially in coastal South-Eastern Mediterranean locations.

Equally deleterious impacts are the social ramifications associated with golf course construction that can lead to social disruption and displacement as well as inequalities in social justice in terms of fair distribution of benefits to all groups of stakeholders (Wheeler and Nauright, 2006). Moreover, golf tourism can lead to an increase in traffic congestion and can reinforce elitism in destination (Hudson and Hudson, 2010). Nonetheless, the most important negative impacts of golf tourism development are related to environmental and sustainability issues (Dodson, 2005; Gössling et al., 2002; Markwick, 2000; Sharpley, 2003).

Undoubtedly, there is a serious concern regarding the effectiveness of golf tourism as a type of development based on sustainable standards that serve equally the environment, the society, and the economy. Briassoulis (2007), in conducting a soft sustainability test for golf-centered development on a Mediterranean-wide level, suggested the criteria of resource maintenance and use efficiency, livelihood efficiency and opportunity, and intra- and inter-generational equity for assessing the resilience and integrity of the local socio-environmental system over time. This study concluded that golf-centered development engenders considerable risks to the sustainable development of destinations in coastal Mediterranean Europe, and as such, it should be embedded within cautious strategic regional planning that is multi-functional, collaborative, and adaptive. Likewise, Woodside (2009) stressed the need for applying system dynamic modeling in examining inputs and outcomes of golf tourism development, which will

embrace a systems view of its multiple positive and negative impacts and achieve integrative rather than advocacy thinking.

The sustainability of golf tourism requires a holistic understanding of the interrelationships among the social, economic, environmental, and cultural elements of a destination that compose the tourism product. The sociocultural dimensions of golf destinations are not fully explored and appreciated in the current tourism literature on how they contribute to the overall experience and satisfaction of golf tourists. Likewise, according to Humphreys and Weed (2012, In Press), little is known about the factors that influence the behaviors of golf tourists and how golf tourism affects the tourist trip decision-making process. This suggests that golf tourism motivations and experiences should be examined in relation to trip behaviors. Thus, the shaping of tourist experience is the result of the interaction between the host destination characteristics and how these are perceived by visitors according to their social and cultural background. In this respect, the authenticity of the destination's tourist product is an important factor that should be considered.

Authenticity is tightly connected to culture and tradition of a destination (Taylor, 2001). According to Sharpley (1994), the concept of authenticity determines something that is genuine, real or/and unique. MacCannel (1973) suggests that tourists seek authenticity; however, the problem amounts to the degree they can find and experience 'real events' in the host community. Cohen (1988) argues that cultural elements developed for tourism may exhibit 'emergent authenticity' and be accepted as 'authentic' by both tourists and tourist producers alike. Waitt (2000) notes that authenticity is used as a promotional device and what is perceived as real is open to interpretation, since

marketers decide what will be authentic and what not. McKercher and du Cros (2002) add that many tourists desire authenticity but not necessarily reality. Tourists as they travel, have stereotypical or romantic images about the destination. In this regard, tourists are motivated by their intrinsic feelings and expectations that correspond to their lifestyle as well as their need for an 'authentic experience'.

Arguably, the complexity of authenticity raises a lively debate over its origins and characteristics. However, it is suffice to say that people visit golf destinations not only to participate in golf activities but also to live a unique experience in an authentic local environment. Thus, it is important for destinations to create experiences that are perceived as authentic by the tourists. Therefore, destinations should identify the motivational and attitudinal orientations of golf tourists that are aligned to the sustainable character of golf tourism within its environmental, social and economic systems.

Golf tourist typologies: motivation, perceptions and characteristics

Perkins et al. (2010) point out that golf is an inseparable part of public performances through which morality and shared cultural values are negotiated and reasserted epitomizing contentious issues related to development, environmentalism, water, land-use, displacement, and labor. For example, Neo (2010) based on the premise that golf is a contested territory encompassing a nexus of community, justice, nature and environmental equity (Olwig, 1996), demonstrated how the politics of golf in the case of Singapore has been depoliticized through the discursive strategies of golf course developers and state institutions that only allow protestors' particular objections to be

brought into the negotiations with the intention to rearticulate them in a consensual way, which will not preclude the development of golf courses.

While the above example represents a conscious tactic used by planners and golf proponents to circumvent and manage dissent toward the construction of golf courses (Neo, 2010), the contested territory of golf evokes a multitude of existing or possible socio-natural relations (Swyngedouw, 2007) that can engender negotiated notions and perspectives about golf. Thus, it is within this context that public attitudes towards golf, golf tourism and golf destinations are shaped engendering meanings and beliefs that (potentially) influence the prevailing management practices and behaviors of golf tourists. A critical understanding of these meanings and beliefs requires the comprehensive exploration of their perceptual and affective components that (re)construct golf tourists' attitudes towards the sustainable management and development of golf destinations.

In this respect, Briassoulis (2010) notes that the relatively few academic studies analyzing opposition to golf development emphasize the central role of perception and the meanings attached to along with the discourses surrounding golfing in shaping public attitudes. Nevertheless, analyses of image, perceptions, and attitudes for golf destinations are scant and limited in scope (Briassoulis, 2010). Specifically, a study synthesized several theoretical schemas to understand the array of factors that affect residents' attitudes toward a proposed golf resort (Hernandez et al., 1996). Two other studies examined golf travelers' novelty, satisfaction, and intentions to revisit (Petrick, 2002; Petrick and Backman, 2001). Oliveira et al. (2008) employed a destination image model to analyze the perceptions of golf tourists in an established Portuguese destination. In

turn, Briassoulis (2010) explored the perceptions and attitudes of signees against the development of a golf resort suggesting that their perceptions are influenced by four inextricably interconnected factors: (1) their socio-demographic characteristics, familiarity with and relationship to the place; (2) framing values and beliefs; (3) the value attached to the place; and (4) contextual factors such as culture, institutional context and development issues.

In terms of fully understanding perceptions and behaviors of golf tourists, it is important to consider their different clusters or types. Readman (2003) suggests that golf tourism includes those who travel to destinations to partake in golf activities for non-commercial purposes as well as professionals and their fans. Hudson and Hudson (2010) argue that three types of tourists can be defined as golf tourists: (a) those that are primarily motivated by golf and therefore travel mostly for active participation in golf activities, (b) those that consider playing golf as an adjunct to their main travel, activity, and, (c) those that have the role either of the spectator of golf tournaments or the visitor of golf-related attractions. Gibson and Pennington-Gray (2005) drawing upon role theory found four distinct types of golf tourist: the sport tourist; the discerning tourist; the resort tourist; and the reluctant tourist. As they argued, this classification of different types of sport tourist is useful in explaining preferences for certain sport tourist roles. Building upon this perspective Humphreys and Weed (2012, In Press) suggest that the golf tourism behavior derives from the influence of lifestage, negotiation and compromise on trip decision-making processes of tourists. Therefore, it is important to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and processes that drive golf tourists' behaviors towards certain attitudinal orientations.

Another aspect that can help in understanding perceptions and behaviors of golf tourists is related to their characteristics. According to Hudson and Hudson (2010), golf tourists spend more on their vacations in comparison with leisure travelers and generally are of higher-spending social groups. As Hennessey et al. (2008) suggest, golf tourists can be categorized into three types of groups: infrequent, moderate, and dedicated. Dedicated golf tourists are usually elderly people, enthusiastic players characterized by higher income, less price sensitiveness, and higher spending than the other two categories. This group of golf tourists can generate serious growth in an area's tourism (Hennessey et al., 2008). Correira et al. (2007) in their description of golf tourists in Algarve, Portugal conclude that golf tourists in the destination are older males and repeat visitors that visit to participate in golf activities mostly because of the desirable weather conditions and the quality of the courses.

Moreover, golf tourism is inextricably associated to service quality. As Moital and Dias (2012) argue, for hard-core golf tourists (those that travel with the prime motive to play golf), aspects of service quality in golf courses, ease of booking and quality of accommodation tend to be significant determinants of their overall satisfaction. This means that serious golf travelers are demanding in terms of quality. The authors argue that recreational golf tourists (those who play golf but for whom practicing this sport is not the main reason to travel to the destination) pay more attention to value as an important influence on their satisfaction and emphasize mostly on the price of accommodation and cost of playing golf. Nevertheless, golf tourism is generally considered as an upscale form of tourism (Readman, 2003) and quality is an important variable of satisfaction. Considering that both service quality and customer satisfaction

are critical factors for the success of tourism industries (Hui et al., 2007), the sustainable development of golf tourism presupposes also the delivery of a high standard product-service mix, which in turn may lead to the overall quality upgrading of a destination.

Kim and Ritchie (2010) argue that the motives of golf tourists are heterogeneous and thus if it is to fully understand their behavior, research should pay attention to their travel motivations. For this reason, they introduce five motivational push factors: (a) business opportunity, (b) benefits, (c) learning and challenging, (d) escape/relax, and (e) social interaction/kinship factors. Moreover, they also suggest seven pull factors: (a) natural environment, golfing-related availability and accessibility, (c) golf resort/course facilities and services, (d) tourism attractions, (e) tourism facilities and services, (f) nightlife and entertainment, and (g) price and ease of access. Based on their motives, the authors identify similarities between golf tourists and other types of travelers such as leisure travelers. They conclude that according to the socio-psychological push motivations, golf tourists could be classified into three types: (a) golf-intensive golfers, (b) multi-motivated golfers, and (c) companion golfers. Consequently, by examining the motivations and subsequent behaviors of golf tourists, destination managers can better understand their perceptions and identify the attributes of the experiences they seek in order to shape or modify accordingly those elements of the golf tourist product that reinforce meanings and beliefs towards making golf a sustainable form of sport tourism development.

The comprehensive understanding of perceptions and subsequent behaviors can be profitably informed by the recent re-conceptualization of perception in the field of cognitive science. According to Clark (2008), the process of forming perceptions is not a

bottom-up one where detailed points are put together to form larger wholes of mental representations, but instead, this process uses the function of predictive coding. This starts with broad constraints and expectations for the nature of the world, and as expectations are met, it makes more detailed predictions. In this dynamic process of forming perceptual mental representations errors inevitably occur leading to new predictions or learning. The implications of the predictive coding notion mean that there cannot be any completely unbiased or unfiltered perception and that there are feedback loops between perception and expectation. In other words, perceptual experiences often shape beliefs, but those perceptions were based on existing beliefs.

From this perspective, the existence of erroneous or antithetical perceptions between attitudinal beliefs and behavioral patterns can be explained. This is evident in the perceptions of golf tourists that may contradict with their actual experience when they participate in golf activities. For instance, Wheeler and Nauright (2006), in suggesting that the final decision about golf's future will be left on the millions of golf participants and spectators, highlight a personal conflict residing in their perceptions. The conflict is between golfers' inclination to enjoy the game in naturalized wildlife areas and their preference for putting areas, tees and greens to be flawlessly green in golf courses. Consequently, to resolve the conflicting perceptions and lead golf tourists towards more sustainable behavioral practices necessitates that we better understand the meaning, characteristics and dimensions of their experience and design accordingly the golf tourist product mix.

Method

In examining the perceptions of golf tourists in Cyprus, this study adopted a quantitative research design in order to achieve the following objectives: (a) to delineate the profile of the Cypriot golf tourist, (b) to identify the reasons of golf tourists to travel to Cyprus, (c) to analyze the perceptions of golf tourists for a number of statements regarding the development of golf tourism on the island and determine the association(s) between the perceptions of golf visitors and their satisfaction from Cyprus as a golf destination (e) to investigate whether the perceptions of tourists correspond to the policy measures for developing golf tourism in Cyprus as a sustainable form of tourism. A quantitative research approach was judged to be the most appropriate method for the specific study in order to measure the perceptions of respondents in a series of statements about golf as an experience. This approach provides a sketch of the golf tourists' motivational and attitudinal orientations, thereby indicating their perceptions for attributes that determine the golf experience in Cyprus, the importance of golf as a motive for traveling to the island, as well as their satisfaction with golf activities in Cyprus.

Context of golf tourism development in Cyprus

The constant fall of arrivals and tourist revenues during the last decade (Cyprus Tourism Organisation-CTO, 2010) that resulted in the decrease of the island's competitiveness as a destination (Boukas and Ziakas, 2012), made the Cypriot tourism policy-makers to seriously consider golf tourism as a means to counterbalance the negative climate and the serious chronic problems of the island's tourism (i.e., seasonality, low service quality, mass tourism) (Archontides, 2007). Hence, the Strategic Plan for Tourism 2000-2010 and

its second version, the Strategic Plan for Tourism 2003-2010 prepared by CTO, put emphasis on the development of a number of golf courses as major tourism infrastructure projects in order to help enrich the image of the island's tourist product (CTO, 2000; CTO, 2005; CTO, 2010). Even though the value of golf for Cyprus tourism was recognized since 1993, serious interest for golf by the tourism policy was noted during the beginning of the new century (Boukas et al., 2012). In 2003 the government granted permission for the construction of eleven more golf courses on the island (added to the already three completed golf courses until then) for the enrichment of the tourism product and in harmony with the synchronized development of property and tourism (Archontides, 2007). Finally, in 2009 the Council of Ministers refined the golf courses policy in Cyprus: the final number of golf courses was determined to fourteen and given to the dry climate of the island and the water shortage problems, each golf course should not use water from the public tanks and draining system but should use individual desalination plants that would produce the amounts of water needed for maintaining golf operation via renewable means (Ministry of Finance, 2009). Until today, five golf courses operate on the island, most of them located in Paphos and are accompanied by other types of development such as real estate and hospitality units.

Research Design and Instrumentation

The study was conducted at three golf courses in the area of Limassol and Paphos, during October 2011 one of the peak months for golf on the island (due to the milder weather conditions). The method used self-completed questionnaires with close-ended questions. The questionnaires were submitted to tourists who had already played golf. The language

of the questionnaire was English since it is the most common spoken language for tourists on the island, and included 25 questions. Additionally, the questionnaire included a short introduction regarding the aim of the study and instructions for completion, mentioning also the confidentiality of the information. Regarding scaling, the questionnaire included (Kent, 1999): binary scales, for the cases that there are two categories, one for cases that possess the characteristic and one for cases that do not, such as the question that asks if the visitors have been in another golf destination during the last three years; nominal scales, that are related to the sets of three or more categories that are exhaustive, mutually exclusive and refer to a single dimension such as travel party; ordinal scales, that maintain the labeling characteristics of nominal scales, but also have the ability to order data such as income, and; summated rating scales (five-point Likert scales) which are formed by allocating numerical scores to ordinal response categories for each aspect of the item being measured, such as reasons to visit Cyprus for golf or the degree of agreement/disagreement on certain statements about golf tourism.

The questionnaire included four sections: (1) questions about the travel profile of tourists in Cyprus, (2) questions about the general perceptions of tourists about golf, (3) questions about golf tourism activities in Cyprus, and (4) questions regarding demographic characteristics. The items in the second and third sections incorporated a number of statements in order to measure golf tourists' perceptions. The statements were based on the themes of sustainability, lifestyle, authenticity and facilities according to the literature, which emphasizes the salience of these dimensions for the tourist product (Briassoulis, 2007; Correia et al., 2007; Dodson, 2005; Gibson and Pennington-Gray, 2005; Hansen and Gauthier, 1993; Henessey et al., 2008; Hudson and Hudson, 2010;

Hutchinson et al., 2009; Kim and Ritchie, 2010; Markwick, 2000; Palmer, 2004; Petrick, 2002; Priestley, 1995; Robinson and Gammon, 2011), seeking thus to shed light on meanings and attributes that crystallize their experiences.

For ensuring the validity/reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was tested for three days prior to the formal conduct of the study. Piloting addressed at ten respondents, produced the need for some small corrections regarding grammar/spelling readjustments, without however misquoting the meaning of the questionnaire. For this reason those questionnaires were included to the analysis process.

Sampling

The sample of the study included all those golfers that visited the specific golf courses for playing golf during October 2011. Due to the difficulty for a precise estimation of the number of visitors during the specific period, non-probability sampling technique was applied through the use of a convenience sample. According to Finn et al. (2000: 118), ‘visitor surveys fall into this category in the sense that only those visitors who are available to the interviewer at a given moment in the time and space, are likely to be included’. Moreover, according to Clark et al. (1998) convenience samples are often used when the objectives of the study are exploratory in their nature and concentrate on the expansion of theoretical concepts and issues in micro-social contexts. In this respect, based on the study’s nature and its research objectives, convenience sampling was judged to be the appropriate sampling method because the research goal was to adequately assess a range of statements and perceptions. Overall, 130 questionnaires were submitted. From them, only the 103 were usable and thus included at the analysis stage of the research.

Given that golf tourists is a distinct segment of Cypriot tourism that occupies a limited number of tourists in the relatively small golf market of Cyprus, the sample is representative of golf tourists visiting Cyprus during the specific period that the study was undertaken.

Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, non-parametric tests were applied as the most appropriate technique of analysis, since there was not normal distribution for all variables tested (Bryman and Cramer, 2001). Chi-square tests were conducted for exploring significant differences between the observed and expected values. Moreover, Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were applied for deriving associations between the perceptions and the overall satisfaction levels of the sample. The level of probability used in the analysis was $p=0.05$. Only findings that indicated significant differences are presented in this paper (marked with a *). The variables with no statistical differences did not specify any explanatory value and hence, are not stated.

Results

Profile of respondents

The most respondents of the survey were males (86%) and belonged to the age group of 61 years old and above (38%), followed by those who were of the age group 41-50 years old (26%). The majority were from the U.K. (52%), followed by Germans (13%) and Russians (10%). A significant percentage (14%) came from other nationalities (i.e.,

Belgium, Turkey, Austria). Concerning their education, the most of them possessed a high school diploma (45%), with those with bachelor degree (30%) to follow. In terms of income levels, there was a wide distribution of the respondents, with the highest concentration on people with annual income of €60,000 and above (40%). Finally, the most participants were full-time employees (63%), followed by pensioners (33%) (Table 1).

[Table 1]

Regarding the travel characteristics of the respondents, the majority had visited another golf course the last three years (87%) while most of them had visited Cyprus for golf again in the past (71%) (Table 2). A significant percentage (78%) arranged their visit to the golf course independently while for the 22% the visit was part of an organized trip. As far as the travel part is concerned, the most respondents stated that they visited Cyprus for golf with their family (32%), followed by those arrived as a couple (27%). Most of the respondents arranged the visit to the golf course (71%). A significant percentage (15%) indicated other way/s of arrangement (i.e., residential tourists). Regarding the type of accommodation the majority indicated that they stayed in an accommodation outside the golf course (35%) while many of them stayed in their own residence either inside the golf course premises (29%) or outside of them (30%).

The top reason for choosing to visit golf courses in the respondents' travel is to play golf (81%). The 30% of them learned about golf course activities in Cyprus by their friends/relatives, many used the internet (21%) as a source of information while many

had a previous knowledge (21%) about golf in the island. Finally, the top reasons they chose Cyprus for golf was because of the weather (27%), the natural scenery (12%) and the friendly environment and/or hospitality (10%).

[Table 2]

Reasons for traveling to Cyprus for Golf

The respondents were asked to rate the reasons for visiting golf courses in a 5-point Likert scale in order to find out their perceptions for each reason individually (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) (Table 3). All scores in Table 3 indicate significant difference. The most important reason for visiting Cyprus for golf is because of the weather (4.85). The natural beauty and the friendly environment (hospitality) of the island are ranked in the second (4.36) and third place (3.92) respectively. The unique/memorable experience (3.63) and to accompany friends (3.62) follow. The rest reasons have lower mean scores (below 3.50) and are considered less important.

[Table 3]

Perceptions of golf visitors for a series of determinants regarding golf in Cyprus

Table 4 presents the perceptions of the respondents for a series of statements regarding golf activities in Cyprus measured in a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). Based on the level of agreement/disagreement the statements have

been classified into three parts: i) statements for which the respondents agreed to strongly agreed with, ii) statements for which the respondents were neutral and close to agree with, and iii) statements for which the respondents disagreed with and were close to neutral (Table 4). Based on chi-square tests, all scores indicate significant difference except the statement ‘playing golf in Cyprus gives me prestige’ that does not indicate any statistical difference ($p=0.29>0.05$).

[Table 4]

According to the findings of the first part, the statement for which the respondents indicated the highest score in terms of agreement was the ‘playing golf in Cyprus brings me together with friends’ (4.32). ‘Playing golf in Cyprus brings me into the nature’ (4.27) and ‘golf tourism contributes to the social well-being of Cyprus’ (4.21) were rated to the second and third place respectively. ‘Playing golf in Cyprus is one of the best forms of relaxation to me’ (4.20) and ‘practices used in Cypriot golf courses to prevent environmental degradation are important to me’ (4.02) follow. According to the findings, the most important items are related to the experience that golfers receive in Cypriot golf courses as well as the significance of golf and its sustainable management for the island.

The second part of the table includes the most items (14 in total). The statements at the places from 6 to 15 indicated scores closer to agree. Among the most important statements in this category are ‘golf in Cyprus needs specialized management to avoid environmental degradation’ (3.99), ‘service provided in golf courses are important for choosing Cyprus to travel’ (3.98), ‘golf is good for the environment of Cyprus’ (3.95) ,

‘golf facilities are important for choosing Cyprus to travel’ (3.95) , and ‘playing golf in Cyprus is one of the best forms of competition for me’ (3.93). The least important statements according to the respondents in this category are closer to neither and have to do with ‘golf gives me the opportunity to know more about Cyprus’ (3.32), ‘golf gives me an opportunity to experience the culture of Cyprus’ (3.43), and ‘I did choose Cyprus because of the unique experiences I receive’ (3.48). Generally, the most important items in the second category are related to environmental issues related to golf on the island as well as the services and amenities provided by golf courses in Cyprus.

Finally, the third category of the table includes the four items that indicated significant scores and are characterized by the minimum level of agreement. The two statements where the respondents disagreed with are: ‘playing golf in a Cypriot course with artificial grass is fine for me’ (2.00) and ‘playing golf in a Cypriot course that doesn’t have grass (e.g., ground) is fine for me’ (2.08). Both of these statements are related to alternative strategies for golf development that are more suitable to the dry environmental conditions in Cyprus and therefore do not use large quantities of water. The other two items of the table are closer to neither rather to disagree and are related with golf as a sport and business activity. These are: ‘playing golf in Cyprus is an opportunity to do business’ (2.78) and ‘instruction is an important factor when being in a Cypriot golf course’ (2.93).

General perceptions of golf visitors and overall satisfaction

Table 5 presents the general perceptions of the respondents regarding golf activities in Cyprus as well as their satisfaction. First, the table illustrates how respondents rated golf as a motive for traveling to Cyprus; the statement that respondents were asked to rate was: ‘In general, golf is an important motive for traveling to Cyprus’. A 5-point Likert scale was also applied (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). Chi-square test indicated a significant score: respondents almost agreed that golf is an important motive for traveling to Cyprus (3.62 from ‘neither’ to ‘agree’ but closer to the second option).

Another statement the respondents were asked to rate in a same 5-point Likert scale was related to the conditions and facilities that Cyprus offers as a golf destination: ‘Golf in Cyprus offers me opportunities to do what I want and like in an environment with ideal conditions and golf facilities’. Chi-square test also revealed a significant score: respondents almost agree that Cyprus offers ideal conditions for golf visitors as far as golf activities and facilities are concerned (3.84 from ‘neither’ to ‘agree’ but closer to the second option).

Finally, the table presents the overall satisfaction of golf visitors with golf activities in Cyprus based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=very dissatisfied and 5=very satisfied). In this case also, chi-square test indicated a significant score; the respondents stayed overall satisfied with Cyprus in regards to the golf activities the island offers (3.72 from ‘neither’ to ‘fairly satisfied’ but closer to the second option).

[Table 5]

Associations between the perceptions of golf visitors and their satisfaction from Cyprus as a golf destination

This survey aimed to find associations between the perceptions of the sample regarding golf as a motive and as an activity and their overall satisfaction. Both of the statements appear to have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction of golf visitors with Cyprus as a golf destination (Table 6).

[Table 6]

Kruskal-Wallis tests indicated that both variables have a significant association with the overall satisfaction. Specifically, for the Statement 1: In general, golf is an important motive for traveling, Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences somewhere among the groups ($X^2=12.89$, $p=0.01^*$). For finding out, where exactly in the group categories there are significant associations Mann-Whitney U test was applied to all pairs of groups. The test indicated two pairs with significant difference: i) those that strongly disagreed with Statement 1 and those that answered neither (Z value -2.10 and $p=0.01^*$), and ii) those that strongly disagreed and those that agreed with the statement (Z value -2.36 and $p=0.05^*$). By comparing their mean scores it appears that respondents who agreed that golf is an important motive for travelling indicated more positive satisfaction than those who strongly disagreed, while those who were neutral were more satisfied than those who do not consider golf as an important motive for traveling.

Regarding Statement 2: Golf in Cyprus offers me opportunities to do what I want and like in an environment with ideal conditions and golf facilities and overall

satisfaction, also Kruskal-Wallis test indicated significant differences somewhere among the groups ($X^2=21.87$, $p=0.00^*$). Similarly, in order to retrieve where exactly in the group categories there are significant associations Mann-Whitney U test was applied to all pairs of groups. Based on the results of the test, three pairs that had significant difference were extracted: i) those who disagreed with Statement 2 and those who agreed with it (Z value -2.34 and $p=0.01^*$), ii) those who disagreed with statement 2 and those who strongly agreed with it (Z value -2.29 and $p=0.03^*$), and iii) those who answered neither and those who agreed with Statement 2 (Z value -2.08 and $p=0.03^*$). According to the mean scores' comparisons, it appears that those who agreed that golf in Cyprus offers opportunities and an environment with ideal conditions and golf facilities are more satisfied than those who disagreed with that. This is even more evident by the second pair which indicated that those who strongly agreed with the fact that golf in the island is a means for respondents to do what they want and like are more satisfied overall than those who disagreed. Finally, the third pair revealed that those who agreed with Statement 2 are more satisfied than those who were neutral. Based on the outcomes of the analysis, there is a positive relationship between Statement 2 and overall satisfaction: those golf visitors that tend to agree with the fact that golf in Cyprus provides an opportunity to express what they want and like in an environment with exemplary conditions and golf facilities, appear to be the most satisfied overall with golf activities in Cyprus. In contrast, those that tend to be more neutral and hesitant with the above statement indicate lower satisfaction scores overall. It appears, therefore, that Cyprus as a golf destination satisfies more those that are passionate with golf activities in the island and less those who are not entirely sure about that.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study shed light on the relationship between motivations and perceptions of golf tourists for Cyprus as a sustainable golf destination. This reveals certain attributes of the golf tourist product that are sought and valued by the golf tourists and contribute to the shaping and meaning of their golf holiday experience. In particular, the major motives of golf tourists to visit Cyprus includes the island's weather, its natural scenery and friendly environment, the tourists' expectation to have a unique experience while accompanying their friends. Likewise, the perceptions of golf tourists about their experience in Cyprus emphasize the attributes of social interaction, environment, and relaxation. In addition, it appears that golfers perceive that golf contributes positively to the well-being of the island through the adoption of environmentally friendly practices to the operation of Cypriot golf courses.

In this regard, golf tourists stress the need for addressing environmental issues in order to avoid the degradation of the island's natural resources. Also, golfers perceive that the quality of the services and amenities offered in the Cypriot golf courses contributes to the fulfillment of a competitive experience that they seek to obtain. This is more evident among passionate or intensive golfers who appear to be more satisfied from their experience in Cyprus than those who have golf as secondary interest. This finding, confirms what was also found in the case of Lisbon (Moital and Dias, 2012) that service quality is a significant determinant for the shaping of a complete hard-core golf tourists' experience, which impacts positively on their perceived satisfaction. Based on the above findings, the Cypriot tourism policy should focus on targeting golf-intensive/fanatic

golfers and build elements in its golf tourism product mix encompassing the attributes of social interaction and relaxation, natural scenery, competition, and adoption of sustainable management practices that will ensure the well-being and environmental integrity of Cyprus.

It is notable however, that according to the findings of this study, golf tourists demonstrate negative perceptions about the authenticity of their golf experience in Cyprus. Specifically, golf tourists perceive that they do not learn anything about Cyprus and its culture and neither perceive their golf holiday as a unique experience in comparison with other golf destinations. This constitutes a major limitation for the competitiveness of the Cypriot golf tourist product that needs to be addressed by the tourism policy-makers and destination managers if Cyprus wishes to become a competitive golf destination.

On the other hand, this study indicated that golf tourists do not seek to enhance their prestige or status when they choose a golf holiday in Cyprus. This is an important finding in appreciating the underlying motivations influencing course and destination choice for golf holidays. In general, golf can influence the reputation of destinations, through the development of dominant and emergent cultures, which allow golfers to both bestow reputation on golf facilities as well as draw on this reputation to enhance their own status or position (Humphreys, 2011). In the case of Cyprus, it seems that golf courses can potentially enhance their reputation through the fulfillment of intensive-golfers' experiences and not through the cultivation of a golfers' culture that focuses on prestige, elite status, and exclusivity.

In terms of the golf tourists' perceptions about the sustainable character of golf, the findings of this study indicate a state of conflict in their perceptions that lies between their concern for using environmental practices in golf courses and their reluctance to play golf in courses with artificial grass or no grass. This seems to be a general problem embedded in the nature of practices and behaviors of golfers worldwide (Wheeler and Nauright, 2006). In the case of small islands, which are more sensitive to the development of sport tourism (Lim and Patterson, 2008), non-eco friendly practices and behaviors pose significant risks for their carrying capacity and environmental integrity. For this reason, in order for Cypriot tourism policy-makers to foster the sustainable development of golf tourism, there should be instituted communication and promotion messages aimed to direct the behavior of golf tourists towards the importance of adhering to sustainable practices. This however requires the development of a comprehensive policy through the adoption and implementation of sustainable management practices in golf tourism.

In doing so, the development of sustainable policies should be based on encouraging the involvement of different stakeholders by fully appreciating their perceptions about golf tourism. This study by exploring the perceptions of golf tourists confirmed the conflicting state of their perceptions about the sustainable character of golf for host destinations and its ramifications. From this perspective, it seems that a systems approach would be essentially useful if it is to fully understand the perceptions and experiences of golf tourists as well as other stakeholders and on this basis to develop policies for the sustainable development of golf tourism. As Woodside (2009) in his call for embracing system dynamics to sustainable golf tourism development emphasized, it is

not sufficient to explain behavior but the goal should be to craft sustainable government policies and management practices -via stakeholder participation of all parties involved- capable of reducing conflicts among stakeholders and avoiding system failures. In moving towards this direction, this study suggests that the integrative and comprehensive understanding of the motivations and perceptions of golf tourists can help to efficiently shape more holistic products that lead to meaningful perceived experiences of the golf tourists. However, the meaningful tourism experiences are tightly connected to other environmental variables related to sustainability measures that would also enhance the image of a destination and therefore the overall perceived experience such as the residents' welfare. In a more general context, Carmichael (2006) states that positive and negative perceived impacts of tourism affect also the attitudes and reactions of the local residents towards tourism as well as their interaction with tourists, which ultimately affects the quality of life in a destination. Nonetheless, such reactions influence also the quality of the tourists' experience and the overall experience in the destination.

Similarly, Sharpley (2009) suggests that tourism policy-makers should not only consider the different needs and perceptions of tourists but also should primarily consider the perceptions, knowledge and developmental needs of local communities. The author states that according to different attitudes, motivations and behaviors of tourists, any kind of tourism environment may be perceived and consumed in various ways. In this respect, tourists may see the environment as a setting for action, a social system, an emotional territory or as self where the tourism environment becomes part of someone's self. According to this viewpoint, tourists could have conscious or unconscious disregard for the environment, could focus on social interaction where environment is irrelevant to

experience, could involve themselves in environment, and/or could integrate with the place adapting behavior to blend with the environment. Based on these behavioral inclinations, golf tourists could have a varied perceived experience in the golf destination, which is shaped by their interaction with the sport itself and according to environmental characteristics such as local welfare and natural environmental resources.

In order to practically create awareness for leading golf tourists towards more sustainable practices, the tourism policy of Cyprus needs to implement relationship marketing techniques. In this regard, a useful tool is the commitment-trust theory that focuses on building and maintaining relationships among tourism policy-makers, golf providers, and other stakeholders. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing is based on the principle that for being an effective competitor you need to have an efficient network of co-operators. In the case of the multifaceted product of Cypriot golf tourism that needs to focus on sustainability, the government should communicate effectively to the providers of golf activities and the stakeholders of the tourism system, the advantages of sustainable management of resources emphasizing on commitment and trust. This could be implemented, by (1) providing resources, benefits and opportunities to the stakeholders, (2) guaranteeing service quality values, and (3) communicating valuable information such as knowledge of the market needs/wants and competitive intelligence about other similar destinations. This would meet the proposition of Woodside (2009) regarding the active participation of all stakeholders in the sketching of sustainable policies and management practices.

From a broader theoretical perspective, this study raises the issue of how we can conceptualize the link among the experience, perceptions, attitudes and subsequent

behaviors exhibited by golf tourists. In this regard, self-perception theory offers a useful heuristic framework. According to self-perception theory (Bem, 1967, 1972) people develop their attitudes by observing their own behavior and concluding what attitudes must have caused them. This means that people reason their own overt behaviors rationally and induce attitudes in the same way they attempt to explain others' behaviors. Self-perception theory can be an underlying mechanism for the effectiveness of marketing communication messages used in golf tourism. The goal should be to lead tourists to comply with a small requirement that promotes the sustainable character of golf (e.g., low-impact transportation such as bicycling/walking, recycling centers, community/environmental communication centers, etc.) and on this basis tourists will be more likely to comply with more substantial requirements that stem from the original requirement. In other words, the initial commitment on a small requirement can change one's self-image, therefore giving reasons for agreeing with the subsequent more substantial requirement.

Limitations

There are some factors that limit the generalizability of the study. First, the sample is relatively small and includes a number of residential tourists. These represent foreign visitors (mostly retired) who stay in Cyprus for several months living in their own properties. The behavior and perceptions of these tourists can be quite different (McWatters, 2009) from golf tourists who visit Cyprus for a short period of time. Resource constraints allowed only a short period to survey the golfers. If there was a longer time horizon a larger and more representative sample would have been surveyed.

To this, it must be added the hesitation of golf course managers to allow continuing access to their premises for the conduct of the study. Finally, due to the lack of research in sport and golf tourism about perceptions and experiences of tourists, there was not a theoretical framework to ground the study, which thus followed an exploratory approach. This brought the need for developing an integrative framework that needs to be tested and elaborated in future research.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study by exploring the perceptions of golf tourists identified their motivational and attitudinal orientations and on this basis uncovered certain attributes that are valued by them and can contribute to the shaping of a meaningful golf holiday experience. These findings shed light on golf tourists' behavior revealing the nature of sport and golf tourism as a trip behavior derived from the interaction of activity, people and place (Humphreys and Weed, 2012, In Press; Weed and Bull, 2009). As Figure 1 shows, this investigation has engendered an integrative perspective for understanding the meaning of golf tourists' experiences and for contextualizing the potential to foster sustainable golf tourism development. From this perspective, a starting point is to examine the relationship between motivation and perceptions of golf tourists that can indicate certain attributes in the golf tourism product sought by them in order to satisfy their expectations. In this dynamic process, the tourism policies and predominant practices by golf enterprises affect positively or negatively the shaping of attributes and experiences in relation to sustainable golf tourism development.

The result of the golf tourists' experiences (re)shapes (by reconfirming or contesting) the public perceptions and attitudes of golf tourists toward the need or not for adopting and implementing sustainable practices in golf. Self-perception is a mediating variable in this process stemming from the nature and characteristics of the experience. In particular, golf tourists observe their own behaviors and the context in which they behave, and thus (re)form their self-image inferring they must have a preference for those behaviors that contributed to the shaping of their experience. The resulting public perceptions and attitudes are then expressed in their motivations and perceptions about golf course and destination selection as well as the search for certain attributes in the golf tourism product and service mix. It seems therefore, that if tourism policy-makers wish to foster sustainable golf tourism development should promote and build sustainable attributes that are capable of shaping accordingly golf tourists' experiences. This entails the inducement of small requirements that can lead to larger sustainability requirements based on the premise of transforming the self-perception and changing the attitudes and perceptions of golf tourists towards the importance of environmentally friendly practices.

[Figure 1]

In general, the applicability of this perspective can help in the examination and understanding of the diversity of sport tourism experiences and how the meaning derived can be linked with sustainable sport tourism development. This study represents an initial exploratory stage in the generation and development of this integrative perspective by employing a quantitative approach. To fully understand the experiences of sport tourists

from this perspective, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches should be used in future studies.

This line of research can examine the ways that the motivations and perceptions of any type of sport tourists contribute to the preference of certain attributes in sport tourist products, and whether general perceptions correspond to perceptions and experiences obtained in a destination. Also, it is important to know how the policies and practices impact on the attributes and experiences of sport tourists. From this standpoint, a central task for future research inquiry is to elaborate a model for designing sport tourist experiences that correspond to the sustainable character of sport tourism and have the capacity to change the public perceptions and attitudes towards the need for adopting, implementing and following sustainable management practices in sport tourism.

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Table 1. Demographic profile

| Characteristic | N respondents | % | Characteristic | N respondents | % |
|--------------------------|---------------|----|------------------------------|---------------|----|
| Age | | | Highest qualification | | |
| Less than 20 | 0 | 0 | High school diploma | 45 | 45 |
| 21–30 | 5 | 5 | Bachelor degree | 30 | 30 |
| 31–40 | 19 | 19 | Master degree | 13 | 13 |
| 41–50 | 27 | 26 | Doctorate (PhD) | 12 | 12 |
| 51–60 | 14 | 14 | Annual income | | |
| More than 61 | 38 | 37 | €10,000 – 19,999 | 2 | 3 |
| Gender | | | €20,000 – 29,999 | 11 | 14 |
| Male | 86 | 84 | €30,000 – 39,999 | 9 | 11 |
| Female | 17 | 16 | €40,000 – 49,999 | 20 | 25 |
| Country of origin | | | €50,000 – 59,999 | 6 | 8 |
| Cyprus | 1 | 1 | More than €60,000 | 31 | 40 |
| UK | 54 | 52 | Occupation | | |
| Russia | 10 | 10 | Full time employee | 63 | 63 |
| Germany | 13 | 13 | Full time homemaker | 3 | 3 |
| Israel | 1 | 1 | One or more part time jobs | 1 | 1 |
| Netherlands | 4 | 4 | Pensioner | 33 | 33 |
| Finland | 3 | 3 | | | |
| France | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Other | 15 | 14 | | | |

Table 2. Travel characteristics

| Characteristic | N respondents | % | Characteristic | N responses | % |
|---|---------------|----|---|-------------|-----|
| Visit other golf course the last 3 years | | | Reasons for visiting golf courses | | |
| Yes | 90 | 87 | To play golf | 100 | 81 |
| No | 13 | 13 | To watch/attend golf events | 11 | 9 |
| First visit to Cyprus for golf | | | To attend an instruction course | 8 | 7 |
| Yes | 30 | 29 | By chance | 2 | 1 |
| No | 73 | 71 | Other | 3 | 2 |
| Arrangement of the visit | | | Total | 124 | 100 |
| Organized group | 22 | 22 | Source/s of information about golf in Cyprus | | |
| Independently | 78 | 78 | Friends/relatives | 40 | 30 |
| Travel party | | | WWW/Internet | 28 | 21 |
| Family | 33 | 32 | Previous knowledge | 27 | 21 |
| Couple | 28 | 27 | Magazine article | 11 | 8 |
| Group | 15 | 14 | Tourist authority | 7 | 5 |
| Friends/relatives | 13 | 13 | Travel guidebook | 7 | 5 |
| Alone | 8 | 8 | Other | 12 | 9 |
| Way/s of arrangement | | | Total | 132 | 100 |
| Arranged by myself | 73 | 71 | Reason/s for visiting Cyprus for golf | | |
| Travel agent in my country (outside Cyprus) | 9 | 9 | Because of the weather | 87 | 27 |
| Travel agent in Cyprus | 3 | 3 | Because of natural scenery | 39 | 12 |
| Arranged by my accommodation's management | 3 | 3 | Because of friendly environment (hospitality) | 32 | 10 |
| Other | 15 | 15 | To accompany friends | 24 | 7 |
| Type of accommodation | | | Convenient location | 23 | 7 |
| Accommodation outside the golf course | 36 | 35 | Quality of golf courses | 17 | 5 |
| Own residence outside the golf course premises | 31 | 30 | Good value for money | 16 | 5 |
| Own residence inside the golf course premises | 30 | 29 | Quality of services/infrastructure | 14 | 4 |
| Accommodation inside the golf course | 4 | 4 | Short break | 14 | 4 |
| Short break (not stayed overnight) | 2 | 2 | Unique/memorable experience | 12 | 4 |
| | | | To accompany family | 11 | 3 |
| | | | Combination with other | 10 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Total spend at the golf course | | types of tourist activities | | |
| Average € | | Part of my tourist package | 6 | 2 |
| 109 | | Professional instructors | 5 | 2 |
| | | Other | 15 | 5 |
| | | Total | 325 | 100 |

Table 3. Reasons for visiting Cyprus for golf

| | Reason | n | Mean | Std. Deviat. | X ² | Sig. Value |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----|------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | Because of the weather | 103 | 4.85 | 0.354 | 51.74 | 0.00* |
| 2 | Because of the natural beauty | 103 | 4.36 | 0.684 | 22.51 | 0.00* |
| 3 | Because of the friendly environment (hospitality) | 103 | 3.92 | 0.737 | 56.81 | 0.00* |
| 4 | Unique/memorable experience | 103 | 3.63 | 0.816 | 35.21 | 0.00* |
| 5 | To accompany friends | 103 | 3.62 | 0.919 | 46.94 | 0.00* |
| 6 | Convenient location | 100 | 3.43 | 1.191 | 15.50 | 0.00* |
| 7 | To accompany family | 103 | 3.42 | 1.024 | 64.33 | 0.00* |
| 8 | Quality golf courses | 103 | 3.40 | 1.013 | 47.63 | 0.00* |
| 9 | Combination with other tourist activities | 103 | 3.27 | 0.982 | 51.42 | 0.00* |
| 10 | Quality of services/infrastructure | 103 | 3.19 | 0.897 | 60.35 | 0.00* |
| 11 | Good value for money | 100 | 3.04 | 1.171 | 15.50 | 0.00* |
| 12 | Professional instructors | 100 | 3.01 | 1.124 | 36.30 | 0.00* |
| 13 | Short break trip | 103 | 2.79 | 1.210 | 42.78 | 0.00* |
| 14 | Part of my tourist package | 103 | 2.55 | 1.281 | 45.79 | 0.00* |
| (* indicates significant difference) | | | | | | |

Table 4. Perceptions of golf visitors for attributes determining golf in Cyprus

| | A/A | Attributes | n | Mean | Std. Deviat. | X ² | Sig. value |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---|-----|------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| Agree to Strongly Agree | 1 | Playing golf in Cyprus brings me together with friends | 103 | 4.32 | 0.744 | 64.26 | 0.00* |
| | 2 | Playing golf in Cyprus brings me into the nature | 103 | 4.27 | 0.509 | 63.92 | 0.00* |
| | 3 | Golf tourism contributes to the social well-being of Cyprus | 103 | 4.21 | 1.026 | 90.74 | 0.00* |
| | 4 | Playing golf in Cyprus is one of the best forms of relaxation for me | 103 | 4.20 | 0.6 | 39.86 | 0.00* |
| | 5 | Practices used in Cypriot golf courses to prevent environmental degradation are important to me | 103 | 4.02 | 0.929 | 69.57 | 0.00* |
| Neither to Agree | 6 | Golf in Cyprus needs specialized management to avoid environmental degradation | 103 | 3.99 | 0.923 | 82.69 | 0.00* |
| | 7 | Service provided in golf courses are important for choosing Cyprus to travel | 103 | 3.98 | 0.7 | 84.845 | 0.00* |
| | 8 | Golf is good for the environment of Cyprus | 103 | 3.95 | 1.07 | 61.61 | 0.00* |
| | 9 | Golf facilities are important for choosing Cyprus to travel | 103 | 3.95 | 0.856 | 125.40 | 0.00* |
| | 10 | Playing golf in Cyprus is one of the best forms of competition for me | 103 | 3.93 | 0.744 | 6.66 | 0.04* |
| | 11 | Additional services and amenities enrich my experience in Cyprus | 103 | 3.83 | 0.797 | 41.04 | 0.00* |
| | 12 | I would spend more money to receive good quality of golf facilities in Cyprus | 103 | 3.78 | 0.874 | 68.21 | 0.00* |
| | 13 | Golfers and spectators should have an active role to the environmental protection of Cyprus | 103 | 3.72 | 0.901 | 69.48 | 0.00* |
| | 14 | Cyprus is an ideal golf destination to me | 103 | 3.72 | 0.954 | 92.69 | 0.00* |
| | 15 | Ecological friendly design of golf courses in Cyprus is important to me | 103 | 3.67 | 1.132 | 49.57 | 0.00* |
| | 16 | Playing golf in Cyprus is a unique experience for me | 103 | 3.51 | 0.938 | 56.37 | 0.00* |
| | 17 | I did choose Cyprus because of the unique experiences I receive | 100 | 3.48 | 0.959 | 23.76 | 0.00* |
| | 18 | Golf gives me an opportunity to experience the culture of Cyprus | 103 | 3.43 | 1.218 | 18.70 | 0.00* |
| | 19 | Golf gives me the opportunity to know more about Cyprus | 103 | 3.32 | 1.173 | 32.39 | 0.00* |
| Disagree to Neither | 20 | Playing golf in Cyprus gives me prestige | 103 | 2.98 | 1.313 | 4.91 | 0.29 |
| | 21 | Instruction is an important factor when being in a Cypriot golf course | 103 | 2.93 | 1.19 | 27.63 | 0.00* |
| | 22 | Playing golf in Cyprus is an opportunity to do business | 103 | 2.78 | 1.379 | 9.57 | 0.05* |
| | 23 | Playing golf in a Cypriot course that doesn't have grass (e.g., ground) is fine for me | 103 | 2.08 | 1.348 | 59.96 | 0.00* |
| | 24 | Playing golf in a Cypriot course with artificial grass is fine for me | 103 | 2.00 | 1.172 | 64.91 | 0.00* |
| (* indicates significant difference) | | | | | | | |

Table 5. General perceptions of golf visitors for golf in Cyprus and overall satisfaction

| Statements | n | Mean | Std. Deviat. | X ² | Sig. Value |
|---|-----|------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| In general, golf is an important motive for traveling to Cyprus | 103 | 3.62 | 1.021 | 73.75 | 0.00* |
| Golf in Cyprus offers me opportunities to do what I want and like in an environment with ideal conditions and golf facilities | 103 | 3.84 | 0.724 | 93.77 | 0.00* |
| Satisfaction | n | Mean | Std. Deviat. | X ² | Sig. Value |
| Overall satisfaction with golf activities in Cyprus overall | 100 | 3.72 | 0.830 | 190.00 | 0.00* |
| (* indicates significant difference) | | | | | |

Table 6. Associations between perceptions and overall satisfaction

| Statement 1 | (n) respond. | Mean rank | X ² | df | Sig. value |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|----|---------------|
| In general, golf is an important motive for traveling to Cyprus ^b | 103 | 3.62 | 12.89 | 4 | 0.01* |
| Pairs ^a | (n) respond. | Mean rank | Z | | Sig. value |
| 1 st pair | 26 | | -2.10 | | 0.03* |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 9.25 | | | |
| Neither | 20 | 14.78 | | | |
| 2 nd pair | 57 | | -2.36 | | 0.05* |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 16.75 | | | |
| Agree | 51 | 30.44 | | | |
| Statement 2 | (n) respond. | Mean rank | X ² | df | Sig. value |
| Golf in Cyprus offers me opportunities to do what I want and like in an environment with ideal conditions and golf facilities ^b | 103 | 3.84 | 21.87 | 4 | 0.00* |
| Pairs ^a | (n) respond. | Mean rank | Z | | Sig. value |
| 1 st pair | 72 | | -2.34 | | 0.01* |
| Disagree | 7 | 22.86 | | | |
| Agree | 65 | 37.97 | | | |
| 2 nd pair | 20 | | -2.29 | | 0.03* |
| Disagree | 7 | 6.79 | | | |
| Strongly agree | 13 | 12.50 | | | |
| 3 rd pair | 80 | | -2.08 | | 0.03* |
| Neither | 15 | 31.80 | | | |
| Agree | 65 | 42.51 | | | |

^aMann-Whitney U test - ^bKruskal-Wallis Test (* indicates significant difference)

Figure 1. An Integrative Perspective towards Understanding Golf Tourists' Experiences and their Impact on Sustainable Golf Tourism Development

