

St. John Fisher College

Fisher Digital Publications

Sport Management Undergraduate

Sport Management Department

Spring 5-2-2014

Pace of Play in Golf

Dennis O. Leahy

St. John Fisher College, dol00284@outlook.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/sport_undergrad



Part of the [Sports Management Commons](#)

[How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?](#)

Recommended Citation

Leahy, Dennis O., "Pace of Play in Golf" (2014). *Sport Management Undergraduate*. Paper 3.

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit <http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations>.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/sport_undergrad/3 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.

Pace of Play in Golf

Abstract

Pace of play in golf is a major problem that is affecting participation rates negatively. A number of issues are compounding the problem, such as technological advancements, length of golf courses, players' individual needs, and contemporary changes in the value placed on leisure time. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the topic in Upstate New York. Surveys were sent to 167 golf course PGA professionals, asking about pace of play at their courses. The survey collected basic information about the professionals' courses and moved to items regarding what the courses are doing and not doing concerning pace of play. Results suggest pace of play is a problem many courses have yet to address but beyond a pace of play policy, other factors can be effective. Implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

Document Type

Undergraduate Project

Subject Categories

Sports Management

Pace of Play in Golf: How Golf Courses in Upstate New York Address the Problem

Dennis Leahy

St. John Fisher College

Abstract

Pace of play in golf is a major problem that is affecting participation rates negatively. A number of issues are compounding the problem, such as technological advancements, length of golf courses, players' individual needs, and contemporary changes in the value placed on leisure time. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the topic in Upstate New York. Surveys were sent to 167 golf course PGA professionals, asking about pace of play at their courses. The survey collected basic information about the professionals' courses and moved to items regarding what the courses are doing and not doing concerning pace of play. Results suggest pace of play is a problem many courses have yet to address but beyond a pace of play policy, other factors can be effective. Implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

Pace of Play in Golf: How Golf Courses in Upstate New York Address the Problem

Picture yourself on the first tee of your dream golf course in a group with close friends or family. The weather is perfect and nothing is standing in the way of a great day of golf. After the tenth hole and three hours into the round, the focus shifts from the game to a question of what is holding up the round. Will the pace of play allow you to complete the round without taking up the entire day? These experiences are occurring too often in the golf industry, turning people away from an otherwise enjoyable game. In its purest form, golf is about enjoying the challenge of the game and interacting with others and nature, but beyond this, every player has his/her own idea of what he/she wants to take away from time spent on a course. Courses struggle meeting these diverse individual needs while simultaneously generating profit. What differentiates golf from many other sports is that each customer consumes the product with different expectations and values concerning pace of play. For some players, it is about playing 18 holes in three hours before running to their children's sporting events, and many others have a limited number of times they can play in a year, and want to enjoy spending time outside with other members in their group. Pace of play is a balance between generating revenue and maintaining customers' satisfaction, a topic that is examined infrequently. Courses must understand the wants and needs of the majority of people playing the game. Previous literature demonstrates that pace of play is a problem, influencing players' enjoyment of both the game and the golf course directly. A number of factors causes the problem, relating to psychological and physiological desires of each golfer. Information gathered from golf professionals would help limit the problem, especially regarding what professionals can do to satisfy the needs of their customers.

Contemporary Golf

Golf transformed significantly in the last 30 years, developing with culture and economic changes. Problems concerning participation have plagued the game for the past ten years; “In 2001, 518.1 million rounds of golf were played. That number has since declined by 4.5%. Kauffman (2005) states that golf just does not seem as in vogue as other leisure activities” (Tiger & Howard, 2007, p. 79). Obstacles such as high cost and difficulty of the game to play turn people away from the game, and are factors that deserve more consideration (Smith & Gayle, 2004). The most pressing issue is pace of play, which is preventing people from enjoying the game. A study conducted by the National Golf Course Owners Association suggests “golfers quit golf because the time needed to play a game is too long, the cost of play too high, or the difficulty of play is too great. The major complaint about the game was the slow play” (Tiger & Howard, 2007, p. 80). This finding illustrates a problem that exists in the golf industry; people think spending all day on a golf course is an attractive pastime, but research demonstrates otherwise. USGA President, Glen Nager, stated, “Five-hour-plus rounds of golf are incompatible with life in modern society” (Newport, 2013, p. A10). Golf courses cannot afford to cater to players who take over 5 hours to play a round, which also lessens course profits. The issue is as much one of revenue management as it is pace of play, a connection examined more closely later in this thesis.

Slow play is not the same as enjoying time on a golf course; excessive waiting between shots erodes the game’s enjoyment, while losing money for golf courses. This influences how much people enjoy the game and perceive they will return to play again. “From 1973 to today, the average worker is working 20 percent more...and this game needs time. The money issue? Forget it. You can still play this game pretty cheap. It’s time” (Tiger & Howard 2007, p. 80). Much is at stake for golf course owners and operators since they observe this problem

influencing their bottom lines directly. More people on the course means more money up front, but what does this mean for the long-term for a course and ultimately the game as a whole? A decline in the game's popularity affected golf courses across the country, including Rochester, New York. With over 70 courses in the greater Rochester area ("Golf Rochester Guide" 2013), the sport is a major source of income for the region, but revenues are threatened by the problem of slow play. Data gathered from golf course PGA professionals would help explain current strategies that enhance players' enjoyment of their time on a golf course. Each golf organization offers its own experiences, with something to learn from each perspective. This information offers golf courses in Rochester a direction of action to satisfy customers using multiple strategies that operate concurrently.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

To understand pace of play in golf, motivations for playing must be explored. An example is provided by self-determination theory, a theoretical framework used commonly to underpin motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This can be outlined through an explanation offered by Deci and Ryan (1985): "A primary focal point of self-determination theory has been to conceptualize human motivation along a continuum, such as learning, satisfaction, personal experience, and well-being" (p. 328). Self-determination theory relates to pace of play in golf because the rate at which people play is based on players' satisfaction and experiences, connecting to golf especially because "motivation has been an important topic in psychology and physical engagement for several decades" (Bae, 2010, p. 8). Physical engagement influences the speed at which people play the game. If people are pushed to play the game faster over time they can come to enjoy the physically activity more (Christopher, 2006). The theory was designed to

represent motivation for a person to complete a task, separated into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Bae, 2010); a person participates in golf because of motivations to fulfill physical and psychological needs. The needs change based on a number of aspects the literature outlines the factors affected by the amount of autonomy involved with a task, as is the case with golf (Guo, 2007). Autonomy is the freedom experienced while completing a task. With golf, the amount of freedom offered to players influences the time it takes to play, which in turn influences cash flows to a course.

At its core, motivation is a “the process relating to the category of outcomes an individual wants to achieve or to avoid as well as to the specific actions necessary to attain it” (Thierry, 1998, p.256). This combines motivation with leisure activities such as golf. “Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation have been closely linked to the study of participation and satisfaction of leisure activities” (Li, 2011, p. 186). Golf is a game amateur players play out of internal motivations or some type of enjoyment; the goal is to get players driven to master the game and increase skills (Li, 2011). Golf’s pace of play breaks down into four problem areas: a) leisure time, b) technology and length of courses, c) age, d.) courses being overcrowded, each contributing to an underlying problem influencing the game and people moving away from it consequently.

Change in the Value of Leisure Time

In contemporary society, time is a valuable commodity (Kirkcaldy, Furnham & Levine, 2001). Work-life balance is often disproportionate for people during the week, leaving weekend time precious when available. Martin (1999) argues we have witnessed “acceleration of just about every aspect of modern life, which seems sensible on the face of it—except in the matter of sports” (p. 22). The author goes on to discuss the fact that many sports adapted to the changes

that have occurred in society to serve consumers better. For example, baseball implemented rules such as limiting the number of warm-up pitches that can be thrown thus the game recognized a problem and altered its rules to make the game more desirable. Golf has ignored the need for change, associating directly with low participation rates. Research suggests that regarding valuable time, people are less likely to participate in golf. The perceptual map of leisure activities in the Figure demonstrates how people perceive various activities fitting into a comparison of hassle, effort, cost, and wants/needs, suggesting golf is very high on cost and hassle, and requires large amounts of time. Subjects in one study did not find that value offered by golf is worth the cost and time (Bates, Kukalis, & Dillard, 2006). Golf courses need to provide more to members and offer players both more services and better experiences for their money.

This finding extends beyond golf to other sports. Leisure time includes other factors, and “golf demand depends on socio-economic variables (such as age, academic qualifications and income)” (Correia & Pintassilgo, 2006, p. 228), factors that change expectations players hold with golf and consequently the value they perceive with the game (Appendix A). Motivation to participate is driven again by intrinsic motivations to fulfill a need in a person’s life (Treasure & Roberts, 1995). Although intrinsic motivations vary by person, demographics can be used to understand players and their needs better. Increased emphasis on leisure time is a common theme in the literature, and golf courses are being forced to offer services that are more family related because of this change; “they’d rather spend their off time with their families, so we’re seeing a transition from the old-school golfing membership to more family memberships” (Willis, 2012 p. 92). In addition to new memberships, many facilities are adding “fitness centers, and many are putting on more summer camps and clinics for children” (Willis, 2012, p. 92),

again to adapt to changes occurring in the golf industry. This relates to learning about course demographics and the wants/needs of the consumers.

With the downturn in the economy since 2008, people have been worried about keeping jobs and providing for their families, major factors contributing to worry about working all day and feeling they do not have time for golf. “People are so worried about losing their jobs, they’re working more and spending more time at the office” (Willis, 2012 p. 92). This change in the economy deemphasizes the sport and emphasizes maintaining a way of life; “keeping your job has become a job in itself. Under the pressure of increased competition, corporate restructuring and aggressive technological change, today’s business world is unimpressed with your longevity, loyalty or financial obligations” (Humphries, 1992, p. B6). This argument demonstrates the meaning of being a professional. Importance is placed on career because of high competition in the workforce.

Technology and Length of Courses

Advances in technology influence sports such as golf, which has a storied tradition and governing body. One area that has changed the game is improvements in golf clubs. Moving from small, compact driver heads to large 460cc heads has brought enjoyment to high handicappers, but such improvements invite other problems. “By all accounts, today’s cocky novices hit just as many awful shots as gorgeous ones, slowing the pace of play” (Are golf clubs ruining the game? 1999, p. 3), suggesting just because the heads of golf clubs are bigger and more forgiving does not necessarily mean players are better golfers. The impact these new clubs have had on the game’s equipment revenue cannot be ignored, and this change is propelled by a club industry that generates \$2.2 billion a year (Limehouse, 2005). Revenue for the sport will only increase, pushing manufacturers to make clubs longer and more forgiving. New technology

makes a player hit a ball farther but not necessarily straighter, which extends the time it takes to play a hole. “Looking for lost balls is one factor that can increase the time to play a round of golf. Advances in materials and production processes have produced drivers that allow an average golfer to hit the ball farther than they could when most courses were designed.” (Speers & Tiger, 2007, p. 3)

This erodes the experience of the game because the length of time it takes to play golf decreases participation, and looking for lost balls increases the time it take to play a hole by 50% (Speers & Tiger, 2007). Courses are forced to make changes to level the playing field and make courses longer and more difficult. “Some golf course designers fear that increasingly potent clubs, in a worst-case scenario, eventually could even render various expensive properties obsolete” (Rose, 1998, p. B8D). Extra length added to a course influences pace of play negatively because of the increased time needed to play, a concept that even touches professional golf. “Augusta National Chairman Hootie Johnson began ‘Tiger-proofing’ the course following Tiger Woods’ 12-shot victory in 1997” (Gordon, 2006, p. 1). This is a direct example of how lengths of golf courses affect both touring professionals and the way they play the game. Coupled with advancements in clubs, courses will face this problem annually. Golf associations such as the PGA Tour have regulations on head size and other performance numbers, regulations that are being expanded.

The lengths of golf courses are cutting into the hearts of golfing populations, and the problem goes beyond professional players; this “equipment allows players to hit the ball farther and more accurately, golfers—professionals and amateurs alike—are less challenged and this in turn likely influences how new golf courses are designed and existing courses redesigned” (Hudak, 2005, p. 2). The next generation of golf course designers must consider these changes

in technology and how they influence pace of play. Areas such as sustainability, aesthetics, and playability will also be of great importance moving forward, and the challenge will be blending all of these areas (Tai-heng, 2004). It is about creating a balance between increasing income and player enjoyment and this can be paired with golf course design.

Ages of Players

The diverse ages of players have a direct effect on pace of play. With each age group comes a reason they play the game. Funk, Beaton, and Pritchard (2011) explain this using the Psychological Continuum Model. “In a recreational golf context, the activity attracts a wide variety of participants and lends itself to exploring a range of participation patterns across an individual's lifespan” (p. 271). The meaning of recreation changes with each stage in life. Each golf course must identify this type of recreation to serve players better. Funk et al. (2011) argue that players in an older stage of life play golf for social aspects, and younger players for the freedom it provides. These values influence time and what is acceptable in the eyes of the consumer. Research shows that “the impatient segment overall is a younger segment. The main reason for playing golf for this segment is the feeling of mastery of the game” (Tiger & Howard, 2007, p. 82). Older groups of people are more likely to tolerate the wait because they play for social and physical aspects of the game. This accords with research on the importance of leisure time for younger people. For golf course operators to speed up play, they must understand the wants and needs of customers. Courses can build tee-times around various age groups and what those groups value in the game. This in turn makes more customers happy and fits with people's motivations for playing golf. An important group of players to the golfing world is baby boomers; “with the maturation of the Baby Boomer Generation, more people retire at a younger

age and enjoy their leisure time in greater numbers than ever before” (Shin, 2002, p. 14). This group is essential because of the amount of disposable income and time they have for the game.

The Echo Boom however, the children of the Baby Boomers, are not as ready to take up membership at private country clubs as their parents once were. Many appreciate the quality of experience a country club offers, yet prefer not to be tied to a single course on a ‘permanent’ basis. Hence, we have experienced the growing phenomenon of the high-end daily fee (HEDF) course. (Shin, 2002, p. 14)

This argument speaks to changes in the game across generations and how the changes influence participation. The value the next generation perceives regarding time does not translate well to golf because of the amount of time it takes to play. Duke (2011) captures this change in value concisely “The next generation lives in a very fast paced world created by their parents. Unfortunately, somewhere during the hustling to soccer practice, then to guitar lessons, and then back home to do home work, these young adults never got to see or learn the value of a leisure lifestyle” (p. 2).

The question arises regarding whether that lifestyle will continue. As the golf population changes, so do its habits and motivations to play the game (Duke, 2011). This change in population will come in cycles like many recreational sports. Understanding the wants and needs of various age groups will help serve consumers better.

Overcrowded Courses and Revenue Management

It is a challenging time to be a golf course owner or operator in the current economic state.

Country clubs are caught in a perfect economic storm. From the perspective of the membership base, many club members have lost employment, and older members have seen substantial declines in retirement savings that translate into a change in their private club lifestyle. (Hirsh, 2010, p. 32)

The number of players on a course plays an important role in pace of play. With high expenses associated with operating a golf course and a limited number of players, turning customers down is not an option. Head professionals can space tee times with longer increments to offer more cushion to previous groups, keep groups correctly spaced, and prevent excessive waiting and multiple groups at the same hole. Speers and Tiger (2007) found that “the optimum tee time interval would be 12 minutes. When tee time intervals are reduced to 10 minutes, no improvement in rounds played exists, but round length continues to increase” (p. 5).

Another option is to examine a group and the time it played, and then adjust when it plays a subsequent time. Courses are developing strict rules around speed of play because they see the importance to their bottom lines. “The course manager can use two dimensions for segmentation—usage (time of use, peak or non-peak) and benefits (the acceptable speed of play). Considering some of the complicated pricing structures offered by many golf courses” (Speers & Tiger, 2007, p. 2). This argument relates to the theoretical framework of motivational theory; people are willing to pay more at different times, depending on their motivations for playing the game. This means managing the revenue of a golf course: “Considering the decline in the rounds played, increasing the pace of play might also help improve the popularity of the game, thus bringing back some players who have felt too time-pressed to enjoy a complete round of golf” (Speers & Tiger, 2007, p. 4). This formula can create a revenue management model for courses, providing guidance and support throughout the year.

Research Question

Research Question 1

The first research question examines what golf courses in Upstate New York are doing to fight pace of play problems. In the current state of golf, pace of play influences participation directly. Although the literature examines this topic closely, what golf courses are doing to curb the problem and help their bottom lines remains unexplored.

Research Question 2

If a course has a pace of play policy, what is its efficiency? With all of the opinions surrounding what to do to fight pace of play, do professionals perceive that what they are doing is helping players enjoy the course more?

Research Question 3

Is there an age group that shows more concern about pace of play at their golf courses than others do? With the cost of time of many age groups being different and the different values each player brings to a course, is there an age group that emphasizes pace of play.

Research Question 4

Do PGA Professionals perceive that the people who are playing their courses are playing the correct tees? From numerous articles outlined in the literature review, the problem of course lengths is common in golf (Tai-heng, 2004). In turn, using the correct tee allows players to play the yardage that fits their ability. This will help PGA Professions understand the importance of playing the correct tee and how they can place more people on a course, thereby increasing revenue.

Method

Sample Selection

A survey was sent to PGA Professionals who are members of the Northeastern New York PGA Section. Only one PGA member per course received a survey to avoid receiving multiple surveys from the same course. The survey will be sent to professionals because they have the most experience and knowledge about a course and its players, and members of this group have received both training and certification, which allow them to answer survey items in-depth. This group was selected not only because of the high knowledge they possess regarding pace of play, but because of high accessibility and feasibility to obtain information. There were no demographic specifications or other restrictions other than being a member of the Northeastern PGA Section. Access to this sample group was met with encouragement and positive feedback during the preliminary phases of the project by members of the Central New York Section. Permission from the final director was received and a contact list developed. Multiple Central New York Section PGA Professionals agreed that this was a valuable area of study, and further agreed to help in any way they could.

Data Collection Instrument

The survey was sent to 167 members of the Northeastern PGA section. The instrument was distributed using Qualtrics software to all PGA members, in alliance with Alan Seamans, director of the Central New York PGA Section. This was done due to convenience and relationships the director had with a number of members. The survey was extended to other members of the greater Northeastern section due to a need for broader reach and higher response rate. The extension added 30 responses and overall depth of information. The survey began with basic information about courses and demographics. The questions flow from two basic questions toward directed pace of play items. From there, the survey split in two directions: a) whether a pace of play policy was present at the course, and b) if so, what it entailed, and if not,

why? The questions were both qualitative and quantitative, with a majority of responses coming from open-ended items regarding pace of play policies (Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedure

Collection was conducted through Qualtrics software, distributed to two panels of members in the PGA section. The first panel included members of the Central New York Section, and the second included Northeastern New York Section members. The survey was distributed on March 25, 2014 to members of the New York Sections. An e-mail was sent with an endorsement from the Central New York office, providing credibility to the survey and resulting in a higher response rate. The cover e-mail appears in Appendix C.

None of the questions would lead to confidential information about a club. The survey was designed to poll information about pace of play, not address financial issues of the courses. The survey was pilot tested by Steve Salluzzo, a member of the Saint John Fisher sport management faculty. Mr. Salluzzo has been involved with golf for a number of years, and is a member of the storied Monroe Country Club in Rochester. He spoke about his experiences with pace of play, and adapted many of the survey items to arrive at a final instrument. The survey was also pilot tested with members of the Methodist College PGA Management major. The lead connection was Harry Hyde, a freshman in the program who was able to distribute the survey for review by a number of his peers. It was important to have the survey examined by people with knowledge of the golf industry, and not Saint John Fisher students alone. This accords with the reason PGA Professionals were selected as participants. The knowledge they have about golf extends beyond a consumer's, and their experiences have been tested through PGA certification.

During the time surveying the PGA Professionals, three members surveyed reached out for more information about the data collection process. For these three individuals, interviews

were conducted about the pace of play policy at their course. This was not a major collection process of the research but was done to provide additional information about the problem of pace of play. These members of the survey population felt more comfortable communicating through this type of interview than responding through Qualtrics.

Data Analysis

The first research question was analyzed by creating groups for responses concerning what golf courses are doing to fight pace of play problems. Then, qualitative data from the open-ended question about what golf courses are doing to fight pace of play problems or why they do not have a pace of play problem were examined. The second research question was explored using descriptive statistics, which show when a pace of play policy was created and how effective or ineffective the policy is. The third research question regarding the effects of age was evaluated with descriptive statistics on how members responded to various age groups. Each age group demonstrates the meaning the group has concerning pace of play. Statistical significance was assessed between age and the presence of pace of play problems. The fourth research question was assessed by selection of whether players are using the correct tees, and coded answers demonstrated the significance of responses.

Specifically the inferential statistic done was a chi-square analysis. This was completed in order to see the level of significance of the pace of play policy, correct tee, facility type and round time concerning the pace of play problem at the course. (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

Regarding the personal interviews results were assessed from qualitative answers regarding what each course is doing to fight slow play. Specifically, does the course have a pace of play policy, and if so, what is it?

Results

Forty-five members of 167 returned completed surveys, a response rate of about 27%. Respondent facility types were public (13), private (17), semi-private (11), and municipal (4). Participants indicated their degree of a pace of play problem; 48% reported it is rarely a problem. Respondents also indicated that a majority of the rounds played on their courses should be fewer than 4 hours (25) or more than 4 hours (16). Significance levels are shown through a chi-square test in Table 1. This shows the significant correlation between using the correct tee and pace of play not being a problem at the course. The table also shows the other factors that were evaluated for their significance level.

Addressing Pace of Play

Sixty-four percent of participants reported they had some type of formal or informal pace of play policy. A majority of responses included a mixture of both formal and informal policies within their answers. Responses bridged the gap regarding current methods in place, broken down into common themes throughout responses.

Time expectation. The first theme that emerged was the amount of time it should take a group of four people to play a round of golf. Over 50% reported that a round of golf should take between 3 hours 31 minutes and 4 hours, below what the USGA suggests a round should take (4 hours 30 minutes, depending on slope and conditions) (Yates, 2011). One respondent explained this view, illustrating the expectations a course has for players:

The golf course has a pace of play policy of 3 hours and 58 minutes to play a full round of golf. The scorecard has time increments that show where the player or group should be at in accordance with our policy. Being semi-private, members usually aren't the problem, it's the non-members which sometimes slow things down.

Many other responses discussed time expectations recorded at the 9-hole mark of a player's round. This is important because it shows how golf courses are measuring time beyond the total round. This excerpt from a professional's response illustrates this concept: "Groups are expected to play 9 holes in 2 hours or less, this is posted in the pro shop and on the first tee. We monitor and or talk to groups that are not close to this time." Golf courses use this halfway point to monitor play and address problems that arise: "We keep track of turn times, and alert groups that are considerably behind. We ask them to allow faster players through at their earliest convenience." This relates to the individual needs of the consumer and how they can be served better. By monitoring turn times, professionals can allow faster players to play though and offer slower groups the ability to take their time, fulfilling each consumer's need.

Position on the golf course. Another theme that emerged was position on the golf course. Participants discussed keeping up with a group that is in front and how that is an important part of pace of play. This was an informal way of thinking about the problem, but was a theme suggested by the data. The following sentiment suggests its importance:

You're considered behind if the group in front of you has left the green of the hole that you are going to the tee for. Once you are behind you should play ready golf and follow the procedures to do that. They are listed on this pace of play sheet.

Another participant held a simple view of pace of play policies: "Keep up with the group in front of you. Play ready golf." This method of keeping up with a lead group is simple, but if enforced, it is a simple step that is part of a great policy.

Enforcement. With any policy, enforcement determines success. Each course had a different way of handling regulations concerning pace of play, but one theme was course rangers. The ranger's job is to inform players of the pace at which they are playing to ensure consumer

satisfaction. Many times, the presence of a ranger is paramount: “We do have a ranger monitor the pace of play on weekends only. During the week, it is usually not necessary to monitor pace of play based on our average rounds for the weekdays versus weekends.” Participants even developed specific policies: “Rangers/Marshalls are used to patrol the course. Groups that are out of position (by definition one hole behind on a par 4 or longer) are asked to pick up the pace. After 2 holes they are rechecked, etc.”

Other participants perceived that they needed to step-up enforcement. Again, communication was essential for many courses with pace of play policies:

We are enforcing pace of play with more communication prior to tee off, more thorough rangers and a tougher policy with leagues that if they hold up play or continue to play at an unacceptable pace, their league will be repositioned to the later starting time

During personal communication with a PGA professional from the Central New York Section regarding enforcement, he spoke about the importance of member commitment. To him, a pace of play policy is only as good as member buy-in; the drive is to create a culture at the club where everyone wants to play faster while still enjoying the game. This in turn increases the amount of possible rounds per year, while increasing satisfaction. Pressure is taken off the pro-shop to enforce rules, and moves toward member accountability.

Effectiveness

For courses that reported having a pace of play policy, the goal was to measure its effectiveness. Results indicate that 85% of the pace of play policies that exist meet the needs of the consumer and improved pace of play since implementation. This demonstrates how effective the three areas of pace of play are. However, there was no statistical correlation found between pace of play policy and pace of play problems (Tables 2 and 3).

Age Groups

Identified in existing research, age changes the reason people play golf. In this thesis, one age group was most concerned with pace of play: people above 60, or 41% of participants. Accompanied with this age group is the average age of members. The average age of players was between 50 and 59 years old (n=24).

Tee Usage

Regarding the correct tees used by players, 67% of players use the correct tee. A correlation between player use of correct tee and pace of play problem was found (Tables 4 and 5).

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine what golf courses in Upstate New York are doing to address the pace of play problem. With the number of people playing golf decreasing each year, the problem is a major obstacle the game is facing and will continue to face in the near future (Tiger & Howard, 2007). Pace of play is defined clearly, but what is being done to improve the issue? PGA Professionals were selected for the sample to tap their expertise and learn how they deal with several major changes in golf. A number of findings stand out as points that deserve further discussion.

Qualitative data from the survey were separated into three groups: a) time expectation, b) position, and c) enforcement. The expectation of time concerns the professionals' views on the time it takes players to complete a round. A majority of courses wanted groups to play in under 4 hours, under the time outlined by the USGA. If this expectation is not communicated to players, they are set up not to meet the expectations of the course. Time is monitored at the

completion of the front 9 as well as at the end of the round to monitor the flows of players. The importance of this is it illustrates the existing literature

The second theme was position on the course. Keeping up with a group in front was a simple response to many course problems with pace of play. On the surface, it makes sense that if players are out of position, pace is a problem. Previous research disputes this using revenue management, a common approach within the topic (Tiger & Howard, 2007). Variable tee time intervals or times of day were not mentioned in any responses in the current study. With 85% of participants reporting that their plans meet the needs of their consumers, the courses are doing many things correct, but understanding the wants and needs of varying consumers helps serve them better in the long-term. Participants of the survey fell short of the revenue management section outlined in the literature review. Having a specific plan that fits the wants of needs of the given course is an area that not one professional surveyed highlighted. Golf courses in Central New York are not taking advantage of the resources and in turn are not maximizing profits.

The last major theme was enforcement. Plans in place are using varying degrees of enforcement, but a common theme was penalties. Pressure has been placed on groups that have been slow on a number of occasions, repeatedly hurting other people playing the course. This information is obtained from rangers and course marshals who have the power to tell groups they need to speed up or let a group play through. During a personal interview, one golf professional talked about the culture he created with members. With members on board, a self-policing policy can take full form. If a member is able to look within and ask, what are my needs regarding the time of the round? This serves all of the people on the course better because their needs and expectation are met. Enforcement is sensitive topic for many professionals because they do not want to feel like they are over regulating the time of players on the golf course. This

negatively impacts the feeling that the consumer has with a specific course, thus taking their business to another course.

The next area of this study examined players' ages and how various age groups view pace of play. Existing research suggests disparate motivations to play golf according to age groups (Li, 2011). In this study, people over 60 were most concerned about pace of play, contrasting with the literature, which suggests younger people want to play faster. This demonstrates that people of all ages, specifically people over 50, care about pace of play. It appears motivations are not determined by age, but by how players approach the game.

The last area of discussion is the tee that players use and how it influences pace of play. Two points clarify pace of play in Upstate New York. Results highlight the significance of using the correct tee. Playing the correct tee has been a major emphasis from the United States Golf Association, with the Tee It Forward campaign (Tee it forward, 2013). By using resources in place, the situation can improve. One method, outlined by the first research question, is the implementation of rangers on the golf course. Rangers often encounter players on the first tee at the start of a round. This is the perfect opportunity to enforce and educate about what tee would be best for the player. This can be determined by handicap or how players approach the round internally. For example if someone is looking for more enjoyment out of a round, they may want to play a shorter tee for lower scores and reduced difficulty (Tee it forward, 2013). Results suggest that beyond pace of play policies, using the correct tee helps courses combat pace of play problems. This simple step of enforcement in tee usage costs almost nothing and can decrease the amount of pace of play problems while increasing enjoyment.

Limitations

A limitation of this thesis was the limited number of respondents used in the sample. Participants were very specific regarding experiences and the region in which they operated. This was due to the convenience of the sample and access to permissions to conduct the survey, which limited the number of possible respondents. Although the survey gathered valuable information concerning pace of play, the study failed to validate connections between pace of play and other variables inferentially. This was due partially to the phrasing of question (do you believe that pace of play is a problem at your course?). The question led participants to answer *no* even if they had a pace of play policy that had eliminated the problem, precluding the ability to determine pace of play's true effect. Another limiting factor was the average age of the players surveyed. With the limited number of respondents combined with a sample that had a majority of players over the age of 50, it was impossible to determine how younger golfers view pace of play. The survey's results accorded with the aging demographic of golfers in the region, and were unable to reach younger markets.

The sample selection of PGA professionals included its own limitations. The issue of pace of play and the overall management of the golf course is essentially the lead job of the professionals. For the survey to be accurate the participants had to admit to shortcomings surrounding their ability to complete their job. This is a limitation because not every person is willing to open up about areas they are deficient in at the same level.

Future Research

Future research should return to the venues examined in this study and conduct surveys with the same participants members regarding their views on pace of play. The majority of respondents reported that pace of play is rarely a problem, but it would be interesting to examine how their consumers feel concerning whether and how their needs are being met. Although this

study does not statistically suggest that pace of play is a major problem in golf, it is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed for the next generation of golfers.

Looking forward, a larger sample size can be taken to encompass a more wide variety of age groups. With the limitations of the restricted age group in Central New York, moving toward areas where the age groups are more diverse can help gain a better understanding of the affect of different age groups and their wants and needs.

Beyond the players age, interview golfers about the reasons that they play the game and then how long their ideal round would take. This encompasses more of the ideas from the self-determination theory talked about in the theoretical framework. The motivation of people towards the game of golf can allow professionals to understand even more what their consumer values when it comes to golfing experience.

Conclusion

Golf courses in Central New York are currently battling for the limited number of golfers in the region. Pace of play has been outlined as a major factor of the declining participation rates within the game. This research matters to the professionals of Upstate New York because it evaluates what golf courses are currently doing to fight the problem and other surrounding factors. This research explicitly shows is the importance of players using the correct tee when playing the game. The correct tee lowers the time it takes to play a round and increases satisfaction which in turn leads to more people playing the game and greater monetary returns. Current efforts regarding enforcement speak about having rangers and employees regulating time of round but are inadequate in the area of communicating what tee the players should use at the start of the round. This small inexpensive emphasis placed on the correct tee has the power to change the pace of play at a course. Pace of play as a whole goes beyond one singular issue and

will continue to be something that is addressed moving forward. Golf course professionals that take into account the individual wants and needs of their consumers regarding pace of play will be the ones that achieve long-term success.

References

- Are golf clubs ruining the game? With space-age drivers, even weekend duffers can tee off like the pros, but now some courses feel like miniature golf. (1999, March, 12). *The Wall Street Journal*. p. W1.
- Bae, W. (2010). Using self-determination theory to understand golf consumption behaviors: An examination of Korean college student golfers in the United States. *Indiana University*. 3(2), 2-24.
- Bates, D., Kukalis, S., & Dillard, J. (2006). The impact of structural changes in leisure time on the perceptions of recreational activities. *International Journal of Management*, 23(1), 86–94.
- Christopher M. P. (2006). Understanding motivation in sport: An experimental test of achievement goal and self determination theories. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 6(1), 43–51.
- Correia, A., & Pintassilgo, P. (2006). The golf players' motivations: The Algarve case. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(3), 220–238.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Duke, S. (2011). *Private country clubs: Are you ready for change?* Retrieved from <http://www.bizgolfguru.com/2011/05/23/private-country-clubs-are-you-ready-for-the-next-generations-golfers/>
- Funk, D. C., Beaton, A., & Pritchard, M. (2011). The stage-based development of physically active leisure: A recreational golf context. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 43(2), 268–289.
- Golf Rochester Guide. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.golfrochesterguide.net/courses>

- Gordon, J. (2006). Golf for dummies, *Maclean's*.
- Gratton, C. and Jones, S. (2004) *Research Methods for Sport Studies*. London: Routledge
- Guo, L. (2007). Self-determination theory of motivation and performance management systems. *Washington State University*.14(3).
- Hirsh, L. A. (2010). Restructuring golf courses and country clubs: Coping with challenging times. *American Bankruptcy Institute Journal*, 28(10), 32–63.
- Hudak, P. (2005). Exploring the relationship between golf course design and equipment technology in southern Ontario. *University of Guelph Canada*. p. 2-35
- Humphries C. A. (1992, April, 12). Keeping career on track requires a bit of extra effort: In a competitive job market, it's not good enough just to keep muddling through. *The Gazette*, p. B6.
- Kirkcaldy, B., Furnham, A., & Levine, R. (2001). Attitudinal and personality correlates of a nation's pace of life. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 16(1), 20–34.
- Li, C. (2011). An analysis of motivation, constraints, and satisfaction among recreational golfers in Taiwan. *United States Sports Academy*, 39(4), p. 15-186.
- Limehouse, F. F. (2005). Three essays on the golf industry. *Clemson University department of economics* p. 77-77
- Martin, J. (1999, June, 9). When it takes longer to go faster: Ball games: Jurek Martin attempts to keep pace with the stop-start, changing speed of play in many sports. *Financial Times*, p.20-22.
- Newport, J. P. (2013, July, 13). Golf journal: The real causes of slow play—those slugs ahead of you are annoying, but the true culprit might be out of their hands. *Wall Street Journal*, p. 10B.

- Rose, F. (1998, August, 12). Golf technology may be going too far—USGA could be set to put a dent in titanium clubs. *Wall Street Journal*, p. W1.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(7), 68–78.
- Shin, H. (2002). An analysis of economic recession on the golf industry in the United States. *United States Sports Academy*. 8(2). 12–112.
- Smith, A. D., & Gayle, M. (2004). Strategic perspectives associated with the golf industry. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 5(1), 367–373.
- Speers, J. D., & Tiger, A. A. (2007). Modeling the impact of new technologies on pace of play in golf. *Academy of Information and Management Sciences Journal*, 10(1), 1–10.
- Tai-heng, C. (2004). A study of golf courses management: The in-depth interview approach. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 5(1), 138–143.
- Tee it forward*. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.usga.org/MicroSiteContent.aspx?id=21474855474>
- Thierry, H. (1998). Motivation and satisfaction. *PJD Drenth, Hk. Thierry, Ch. J. de Wolff (Eds.), Handbook of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 4, 253-289
- Tiger, A. A., & Howard, R. W. (2007). Managing golf course revenue using pace of play model. *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), 79–87.
- Treasure, D. C., & Roberts, G. C. (1995). National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education Goal Theory to Physical Enhancing Motivation. *Quest*. 47(4). p. 475-489
- Willis, D. (2012). *Golf and country clubs facing challenges head on*. Retrieved from http://roughnotes.com/rnmagazine/2012/april2012/2012_04p092.htm

Yates, B. (2011) A simpler game. Retrieved from http://www.usga.org/about_usga/A-Simpler-Game/The-Hazards-of-Slow-Play/

Table 1

Chi-square Analysis

	Correct Tee	-.406	.001*
Pace of Play Problem	Pace of Play Policy	.146	.685
	Facility Type	.161	.201
	Round Time	.160	.502

Table 2

Crosstabulation of Pace of Play Problem (Does your course have a pace of play policy?)

		Does your course have a pace of play policy?		Total
		Yes	No	
Pace of Play a Problem?	Yes	11	7	18
	Rarely	12	9	21
	Never	2	0	2
Total		25	16	41

Table 3

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.065	.146	-.408	.685 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.041	.152	-.254	.801 ^c
N of Valid Cases		41			

^aNot assuming the null hypothesis.

^bUsing the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

^cBased on normal approximation.

Table 4

Crosstabulation of “Do you believe that pace of play is a problem at your golf course?” and “In your opinion, do a majority of your players use the correct tee?”

		In your opinion, do a majority of your players use the correct tee?		
		Yes	No	Total
Do you believe that pace of play is a problem at your golf course?	Yes, during all play	1	5	6
	Yes, only during weekends or holidays	6	6	12
	Rarely a problem	19	2	21
	Non-issue	1	1	2
Total		27	14	41

Table 5

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.482	.150	-3.434	.001 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.489	.150	-3.502	.001 ^c
N of Valid Cases		41			

^aNot assuming the null hypothesis

^bUsing the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

^cBased on normal approximation

Appendix B

Survey

Golf Pace of Play

Q1 What type of facility is your golf course?

- Public (1)
- Private (2)
- Semi-Private (3)
- Municipal (4)

Q5 What is the AVERAGE age of the people who play your course?

- 20-29 years (1)
- 30-39 years (2)
- 40-49 years (3)
- 50-59 years (4)
- Over 60 years (5)

Q6 Do you believe that pace of play is a problem at your golf course?

- Yes, during all play (1)
- Yes, only during weekends or holidays (2)
- Rarely a problem (3)
- Non-issue (4)

Q13 From your observation which age group would be most concerned about pace of play?

- 20-29 years (1)
- 30-39 years (2)
- 40-49 years (3)
- 50-59 years (4)
- Over 60 years (5)

Q3 In your opinion, how long should it take a group of four golfers to complete an 18-hole round at your golf course?

- Over 5 hrs (1)
- Between 4 hrs 31 mins and 5 hrs (2)
- Between 4hrs and 4hrs 30 mins (3)
- Between 3 hours and 31 minutes and 4 hours (4)
- Between 3 hrs. and 3hrs 30 mins (5)
- Under 3 hrs (6)

Q14 In your opinion, do a majority of your players use the correct tee ?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q4 Does your course have a pace of play policy?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To Please briefly describe the pace of p...If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Are there any specific reasons for th...

Q8 Please briefly describe the pace of play policy.

If Please briefly describe the... Is Displayed, Then Skip To Would you describe your policy as for...

Answer If Does your course have a pace of play policy? Yes Is Selected

Q15 Would you describe your policy as formalized (something that is clearly regulated and communicated to players) or informal (something done more behind the scenes)?

- Our policy is more formalized (1)
- Our policy is more informal (2)
- Our policy is somewhere between formal and informal (3)

If Our policy is more formalized Is Selected, Then Skip To Do you feel that pace of play has imp...If Our policy is more informal Is Selected, Then Skip To Do you feel that pace of play has imp...If Our policy is somewhere bet... Is Selected, Then Skip To Do you feel that pace of play has imp...

Q12 Are there any specific reasons for the lack of pace of play policy?

Answer If Does your course have a pace of play policy? Yes Is Selected

Q11 Do you feel that pace of play has improved at your golf course since implementing your policy?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Appendix C

Dear Participant,

My name is Dennis Leahy and I am a senior sport management major at Saint John Fisher College. For my final project, I am examining pace of play in the game of golf. More specifically, learn what courses in the Central New York Section are doing to improve this issue. This is an area that I have a passion for from working at Seneca Falls Country Club for the past three years. Because of the knowledge you have regarding the game of golf and your course, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached survey.

The following questionnaire will require approximately 15 minutes to complete. The name of the golf course will not be exposed but the answers will be used to learn more about the problem of pace of play and how policies are working.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information that will make the game of golf more enjoyable for players in Central New York.

Sincerely,

Dennis Leahy
Student
845-913-5595

Dr. Dane-Staples
Professor
edane-staples@sjfc.edu