

SUCCESS OF PRIVATE GOLF COURSE TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND.

Natnaporn Aeknarajindawat*
Nattachai Aeknarajindawat**
Damkerng Aswasuntrangkul**

*Graduate School, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand
Email: natnaporn.ae@ssru.ac.th

**Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand
Email: nattachai.ae@ssru.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The research aimed to study factors influencing the success of private golf course management in Thailand. The research methodology represented qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and participation observation. The population represented investors, golf course executives and golf tournament managers; 30 participants were collected through purposive selection from every province. The data collection was made from constructed interviewing forms and joining the golf activities with observation, data analysis was obtained by synthesis and extraction to remain crucial issues for research reviewing and answering.

Key success factors of private golf course management in Thailand were obtained the in-depth interviews from informants that comprised of location, design & construction, maintenance, management and finance in addition the government sector guaranteed the safety travelling, government policies supporting on tourism and sports.

INTRODUCTION

Golf tourists came to play golf in all regions of Thailand (Thaweephon & Yuwanont, 2014) that contributed the growth of income in golf tourism in Thailand with 14% of Gross domestic Product (Bank of Thailand, 2014) and government agencies that were responsible for supervision The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to formulate policies and plans, promote and support the market expansion to the target group in accordance with the policies of Ministry of Sports and Tourism including the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2012-2016. The supporting and growth of the business sector found that golf courses in Thailand were constantly expanding (Thawatchai Aranyik, 2014) from 223 golf courses to 243 golf courses in three years with nine percent increasing (Thailand Golf Sourcing Guide, 2013 & Thaweewphon & Yuwanont, 2014). In addition, further studies found golf courses in Thailand could be categorized according to the two types of operational objectives, the government golf courses that were used as welfare of the staff under the jurisdiction and private golf courses were used as goods and services for business activities (Thaweephon & Yuwanont, 2014).

Dr. David B. Hueber (2012), a golf course management expert, revealed the significant achievements of golf course management that be considered from the location, design and construction including maintenance golf courses to meet standards as well as the research of Thawiwat Thawiphon and Prangthip Yuwanon (2014) regarding the prioritization of location, design and construction materials including maintenance to meet the standards and needs of clients. The GFK Market Wise (2013) presented the report of golf tourism market potential

and size to the Tourism Authority of Thailand in accordance with the research of Thawiwat Thaweephon on the marketing factors that the foreign golfers prioritized to use golf courses in Chiang Mai (Thawiwat Thaweephon, 2012) on factors such as golf courses, aesthetic appearance, reputation and price in the respective order. The spending potential of some foreign golfers and playing fees in Thailand was still low compared to other countries, but all of these also be considered crucial things that generated the most extraordinary level of customer satisfaction and repurchasing (Humphreys, 2011).

The researcher considered the necessity and importance of the study and success factors for managing a private golf course in Thailand, the finding contributed investors and researchers successful guidelines for management golf courses in accordance with business objectives.

OBJECTIVE

To study factors influencing the success of private golf course management in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Golf Tourism was originated among the industrial revolutions with social and economic changes. The boom in rail transport contributed people in that era liked traveling to play golf, spending time with fun and challenge of various playing on the holidays (www.golfeurope.com) and developed to be sport tourism at the present. Sport activities travelling combined directly or indirectly with traveling for tourism and commercial reasons nor tourist attraction related to sports or bodily activities which required sport activities as incentives for travel (Gammon & Robinson, 1997). Therefore was a niche market for tourism that was determined the size for the expansion of tourists. Sports tourism was developed into the development of modern sports tourism that caused of expanding the scope of participants in sports activities and activities during the travel trip and interest in exercising for health. The guidelines for managing sports tourism activities were crucial determined by the various facilities and opportunities for tourism, rest and sports. The patterns of sports tourism management were uncomplicated in the past, but nowadays there were trying to create activities to meet new needs and encourage tourism needs. The program was prioritized on the whole process that the success of services management obtained natural resources to maximize efficiency with comprehensive event plans and appropriated schedules. The niche market for sports tourism was divided into four groups (Maier & Weber, 1993) as following.

1) A group of top performance athletes must be participants that that tournament facilitated them in place according to the regulations of sports or sports tournaments such as the Olympic Games that the host country provided facilities to achieve the standards of the International Olympics Committee.

2) Mass Sport, a group of tourists established an explicit goal in traveling and sports facilities that would remain the factor to consider in traveling such as golfers.

3) Occasional Sports represented a group of people who involve in sports with a little of skill and focusing on relaxation such as bowling players.

4) Passive sports tourism travelled to join the great sport tournament such as the World Cup and Olympics.

These sporting factors caused sport tourism that established around the world and called "Periodic Marketing." Sport tourism represented the combination of travel and tourism with the competition venue for participants such as the PGA Tour: Professional Golf Association Tour that resulted in a circulation of sports traveler because of the rotation of the

competition. The growth of golf course business generated the tourism revenues to the country, therefore Tourism Authority of Thailand promoted and supported them into policies in order to expand the quality market with a niche market that consisted of golf, medical & wellness, scuba diving, wedding & honeymoon, shopping, entertainment and eco & adventure, which were market group with potential, rapidly expanding and high purchasing power (Tourism Authority of Thailand.2012). Thailand was the only country that the golf course was ranked seventh in the world after the United States, tourists travel around the world visited with 20 percent of sales rates of golf packages by tour operator within two years (IAGTO, 2013). The amount in the year 2013 increased 11 percentage and estimated that the sales growth continually increased in the year 2014 (IAGTO's second annual golf tourism survey, 2014) and average 21 percent of accumulating growth of holiday sales.

Golfer behavior represented travelling to new golf courses to find more challenges than the local golf course as a member, therefore, there were many new golf courses to support the golfers' needs (Thaweophon & Yuwanont, 2014). These reasons contributed the golf tourism in Thailand to be the world's most global sports relating travelling market. It was estimated that over 50 million tourists traveled to enter the tournament around the world with fun on golf holidays in the best golf course, the surveys by tourism of Thailand found that the golf courses in Thailand were ranked the one of the most popular vacation destinations in Asia in 2014.

The golf organizations structure on a professional golf tournament in 1860 represented the Open Championship that caused more alertness in the competition. The establishment of an organization who performed the professional golfers in particular and the standard of prize as a tool to determine the quality of the participants, including the United States Professional Golf Association was established in 1916 to manage the competition in the Americas. Ladies Professional Golf Association was established in 1959 as the Women's Professional Golfers Association of the United States of America to support the professional women golfers. The European Tour was appointed in 1972 to manage the competition in Europe. Japan established an association to compete the golf for the first time in Asia but the competing occurred in Japan, called the Japan Tour in 1973. In the year 1995, an organization was established to support the professional competition in Asia on behave of name Asian Tour. Simultaneously, many organizations were established tournaments to invite professional golfers for joining including tournaments such as Web.Com Tour, One Asian Tour, Challenge Tour, Australia Tour. In the present, professional players the desired to play in various tours that were determined by prize money which the prize money of the international competition could be ranked from the top 10 highest to lowest in prize money, including 1) PGA Tour 2) European Tour 3) Japan Tour 4) PGA Tour Australia 5) Web.com Hybrid Event Tour 6) Asian Tour 7) Sunshine Tour 8) Web.com Tour 9) European Challenge Tour Final Series 10) European Challenge Tour.

To determine the prize money and reward points with points were allocated to the suitable achievement for all professional golfers in the world, in which the points were divided for the tour or the organization who succeeded the right to manage competitions for professional golfers for prizes and reward points were known as Official World Golf Ranking.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology represented qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and participation observation. The population represented investors, golf course executives and golf tournament managers; 30 participants were collected through purposive selection from every province. The data collection was made from constructed interviewing

forms and joining the golf activities with observation, data analysis was obtained by synthesis and extraction to remain crucial issues for research reviewing and answering.

RESULTS

Key success factors of private golf course management in Thailand were obtained the in-depth interviews from informants that comprised of location, design & construction, maintenance, management and finance in addition the government sector guaranteed the safety travelling, government policies supporting on tourism and sports.

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