

Beyond the Greens: Motivations and Behaviour of Golf Event Tourists in an Emerging Destination

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Abstract: Golf event tourism is recognised as a significant component of the sport tourism industry, distinguished as a high-profile tourism product capable of generating direct and indirect economic benefits, diversifying tourism provisions, and mitigating tourism seasonality. This holds particular salience in nascent destinations where, if strategically harnessed, golf event tourism can serve as a catalyst for economic resilience, stimulate domestic travel, and facilitate the equitable distribution of economic and social advantages. Notwithstanding these potential benefits, extant research has predominantly examined golf as a general tourism product rather than as a specific event, and has not adequately explored its attendees as drivers of domestic tourism behaviours. Consequently, the present study aimed to address this lacuna by investigating the motivations and behaviours of golf event tourists within an emerging destination. This research foregrounds the perspectives of event attendees and participants, thereby introducing a specific event-centric lens into existing golf tourism scholarship. The findings of the study reveal a multifaceted motivational framework, underscoring the critical importance of social, event-specific, and symbolic motivations within the golf event context. Furthermore, golf event tourists are identified as pivotal in fostering future loyalty at both event and destination levels. The study offers pertinent implications for destination management and event planning strategies.

Keywords: golf events, golf tourism, Nedbank Golf Challenge, South Africa, emerging destinations

Introduction

Destinations globally, particularly in emerging nations, are increasingly investing in hosting sport events for reasons such as enhancing the tourism experience, destination branding, and social and economic development (Chalip, 2004; Hemmonsby & Tichaawa, 2018, 2019, 2020; Ziakis, 2023). Golf tourism, including travel for golf events, is a significant sector of the global tourism industry, attracting many local and international tourists (Humphreys, 2017; Jeong, 2023). South Africa has become a notable global competitor and attractive destination for sport events, experiencing various benefits from hosting them. Sport event tourism in the country is a recognised niche tourism product, identified as a tool to create national identity and support economic and social development (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018a/b; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021, 2023; Mchunu & Tichaawa, 2025). It has served as a catalyst for urban regeneration and development through new business and employment creation, and for non-monetary benefits like improving destination image (Hall, 2010; Hallman & Breur, 2010; Cheung et al., 2016).

Among South Africa's sport events, the Nedbank Golf Challenge (NGC) is a hallmark golf event, hosted annually in Sun City. First held in 1981 and previously known as the Million Dollar Challenge, it is a highlight on the South African golf and social calendar, attracting prominent international and local golfers (Nedbank Golf Challenge, 2025). Hallmark events are those held for a limited duration, aiming to increase destination brand, attractiveness, and visibility due to their unique nature and notable reputation (Lu, 2021). Getz (1997), an early scholar on hallmark sport events, noted their considerable importance for traditions, customs, publicity, and public image, creating a competitive advantage for the host destination and community. Despite the prominence of golf event tourism, there is limited empirical understanding of golf event attendees' motivations and behaviours, particularly in emerging destinations. While golf event tourism continues to grow, academic understanding of the changing motivations, behaviours, travel patterns, and profiles of golf event tourists in developing contexts remains limited (Garcia-Mestanza & Garcia, 2025). Early scholars on tourist profiling noted its importance for event managers in hosting hallmark sport events, to better understand attendees and their behavioural patterns, thereby maximising event benefits for the destination and local communities (Kerstetter et al., 2004; Pius & Henk, 2004; Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016). The unique nature of golf events necessitates a close examination of attendees and participants.

While previous research has been conducted on golf tourism in South Africa, no published academic study specifically examines the NGC, despite it being South Africa's flagship golf event. Most prior research has considered golf as a tourism product rather than focusing on a specific event as a driver of domestic tourism behaviours. Where research has been conducted, it has largely focused on the general attributes of a tourism destination as they relate to golf, ignoring the distinct features of golf event destinations and attendees that generic attributes may not cover (Lebrun et al., 202; Cifci et al., 2025).

Despite growing global interest in golf tourism, existing studies do not specifically focus on golf event tourists, viewing them instead as sport tourists, leisure tourists, or a hybrid, motivated solely by destination and golf-related attributes. Minimal attention is paid to golf events as primary motivators of travel. Where events have been examined, they are often viewed as secondary attractions rather than the central reason for travel and behavioural drivers. This gap is particularly evident in developing contexts, where sport events are increasingly used as catalysts for economic and tourism development, yet empirical research on event attendees remains limited. This has resulted in a lack of thorough understanding of the specific golf event tourist, particularly in developing and emerging contexts.

The present study seeks to address this gap by applying an event tourism lens to golf tourism research in South Africa, foregrounding domestic and regional attendees and participants, and examining how golf events influence tourism motivations and behaviours. In doing so, it moves beyond traditional approaches to golf tourism research, considering golf events as drivers for tourism development, destination engagement, and repeat visitation. By examining the motivations and behavioural intentions of attendees at the NGC, the study provides novel empirical

insights into the role of golf events in stimulating tourism development in an emerging nation. This shifts the focus from golf events as elite and solely for inbound travellers, to drivers of domestic tourism in less developed areas. The study further offers insights into who attends golf events, why they attend, and how their behaviours can be used for developing sustainable tourism growth strategies.

Accordingly, the aim of the study is to determine the motivations and behavioural intentions of attendees at the NGC, identifying their key motivations for attending, and examining how these relate to their behavioural intentions. The following section reviews relevant literature on golf tourism, golf event tourism, and tourist motivations and behaviours within the context of sport tourism. This is followed by a description of the methodology adopted for the study, the empirical results, and the findings in relation to existing literature. The article concludes by outlining the practical and theoretical implications of the study, also identifying limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Golf event tourism

Golf tourism is conceptualised as non-commercial travel undertaken for engagement in golf-related activities beyond the traveller's local environment (Hudson, 2003; Sen & Akel, 2021). This encompasses travel to destinations offering golf-related activities, whether for active participation or spectating. Within the broader sport tourism landscape, golf event tourism warrants significant consideration due to its traditional association with high-income demographics (Hutchinson et al., 2009). Participants and spectators in golf events frequently originate from higher socioeconomic strata, possess substantial discretionary spending capacity, and often exhibit a propensity for repeat visitation (Sen & Akel, 2021). Golf event tourism is widely regarded as a premier sport tourism product, offering attendees distinctive experiences that transcend their everyday routines (Weed, 2009; Gibson et al., 2012; Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018a/b; Peric et al., 2019). This elevated profile is further attributed to its direct and indirect income-generating potential for host destinations, its capacity for tourism product diversification, and its contribution to mitigating tourism seasonality (Butler, 2019; Anedda et al., 2020).

The impacts of golf event tourism on a destination are multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative consequences (Boukas & Ziakas, 2013). Positive impacts include contributions to economic growth and social prosperity, reduction of tourism seasonality, development and revitalisation of underdeveloped and rural areas, diversification of the tourism product, and enhancement of destination image and competitiveness (Markwick, 2000; Palmer, 2004; Butler, 2005). Conversely, potential negative impacts include the overconsumption of scarce resources and the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequalities (Bramwell, 2004; Briassoulis, 2007; Hudson & Hudson, 2010). Consequently, the sustainability of golf event tourism necessitates a holistic understanding of the golf event tourist, their behaviours, and their characteristics, enabling the development of appropriate tourism products and the effective mitigation of potential adverse effects.

The leveraging of golf event tourism refers to the maximisation of the sector's long-term impacts, viewing it as a strategic resource for achieving positive outcomes (Chalip, 2004; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015). This constitutes a strategic activity requiring implementation both prior to and during golf events, employing a proactive approach to capitalise on opportunities (Getu, 2023). Effective leveraging of golf event tourism mandates a clear understanding of the golf event tourist, as this facilitates a more targeted approach by stakeholders to increase attendance and maximise revenue; develop golf event tourism products conducive to long-term growth; generate increased economic benefits; foster positive social outcomes; and manage resources efficiently (Tichaawa & Harilal, 2016; Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021). All these elements are integral to successful leveraging efforts.

Sport event tourism in South Africa has consistently served as a tool for nation-building, particularly following the dismantling of the apartheid regime (Bama & Tichaawa, 2020). As a component of the sport event tourism industry, golf events play a significant role in the South African event portfolio due to their potential to contribute to economic sustainability by enhancing the liveability of host destinations, improving social equity through the provision of employment opportunities and income generation, and fostering positive economic legacies that promote the long-term well-being of local communities (Kennelly, 2002; Mair et al., 2024). Despite this, inclusive transformation within sectors such as golf event tourism has been relatively slow, and a lack of accessibility to this sector persists (Alvarado, 2022; Florido-Benítez, 2024; Liang & Ong, 2025). Barriers limiting the development of inclusive golf event tourism include cost and time constraints, social obstacles, and, predominantly, the perception that golf events are dominated by older, white, high-earning attendees. This perception creates barriers to entry for younger generations and female event attendees (Hwang et al., 2015; McGinnes et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2022). In response, the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) launched its golf chapter in 2024, specifically aimed at uniting the golf tourism community and promoting South Africa as a golf event tourism destination, capitalising on the fact that golf event tourists to the country spend 120% more per day than the average tourist (SATSA, 2024).

The golf event tourist

According to Hudson & Hudson (2010), golf tourists can be categorised into three types: those primarily motivated by golf, travelling for active participation; those who engage in golf as an ancillary activity during their main travel; and those who attend golf tournaments as spectators or visit golf-related attractions. Hennessey et al. (2008) further proposed a categorisation of golf tourists as infrequent, moderate, or dedicated. The most salient of these categories is the dedicated golf tourist, typically characterised as an older, enthusiastic player with a high income and low price sensitivity, capable of generating significant growth for the local tourism industry (Hennessey et al., 2008). In terms of motivations, golf tourists are commonly driven by factors such as golf-related availability and accessibility, course facilities and services, ancillary tourism attractions and activities, nightlife and entertainment options, price, ease of access, opportunities for social interaction, business

opportunities, escapism, and relaxation (Kim & Ritchie, 2010). Studies profiling golf tourists broadly concur that these individuals travel from their primary residence to participate in golf-related activities, undertake frequent trips, tend to have a longer average stay than other leisure tourists, and exert a substantial impact on local economies (Kim & Ritchie, 2012; Lopez-Bonilla et al., 2020; Jeong, 2023). The typical profile of a golf tourist is an older male with a university degree, above-average purchasing power, and an extended length of stay at a destination (Garcia-Mestanza & Garcia, 2025). Consistent with these studies, much academic work has predominantly focused on profiling golf tourists generally, rather than specifically golf event tourists. This is a significant concern, as golf event tourists represent an important heterogeneous market whose profiles and behaviours comprise a combination of unique sociodemographic and psychographic factors. Golf event tourists exhibit considerable variation not only in their demographic and sociographic characteristics but also in their behavioural and tripographic preferences, often giving careful consideration to non-golf attributes of a trip, such as nearby facilities, products, and tourism services (Price, 2012). Despite this, the multidimensionality of the golf event tourist has received limited academic consideration or attention (Butler, 2019; Brey & Meitner, 2024).

The traditional profile of the golf event tourist is strongly rooted in notions of privilege, elitism, and limited participation (Humphreys, 2011; Pereira et al., 2015). While there has been an increase in female participation in golf event tourism, a lack of diversity and representation persists, particularly in the context of emerging nations (Huth, 2019). In these contexts, profiling is essential to identify underrepresented groups, understand evolving motivations, and design strategies that broaden access (Getz & Page, 2020; Ito & Higham, 2021). By profiling golf event tourists, emerging golf event tourism destinations can move beyond traditional stereotypes, uncover new patterns of interest, enhance market diversification, and support goals of inclusivity and equality.

Theoretical framework

The current study is anchored in the Sports Fan Motivational Scale (SFMS) which was first presented by Wann in 1995, incorporating both the entertainment and aesthetic needs of sport fans by drawing on existing research on these individuals. The scale presents eight motives: eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation and family needs (Wann, 1995). These motives are further described in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Motives of the Sport Fan Motivational Scale

Eustress	Euphoric or enjoyable stress which stimulates excitement through sport.
Self-esteem	Fans enjoy watching sport as it gives them a feeling of success and accomplishment when their team wins or performs well. Fans experience an enhanced feeling of self-worth when they attend a live sport event.
Escape	The desire of sport fans to escape their daily routines and divert from their usual lives.

Entertainment	The desire to be entertained and thrilled by a sport event
Economic	The desire to make a profit from an event through betting and winning
Aesthetic	Seeing sport as an art form that contains beauty and creativity through the performances of the athletes. The desire to see grace and beauty in live sport experiences.
Group affiliation	Wanting to sport time in a social environment to avoid loneliness and to be amongst felly people and supporters.
Family needs	The desire to spend time with family members .

Source: Wann (1995); Da Silva & Las Casas (2017); Smith (1998); Branscombe & Wann (1994)

The SFMS was adopted as the theoretical grounding of the study as it is one of the most established frameworks for considering sport event tourist motivations and has been widely validated in existing sport event tourism research. This study applies this well-established theory to a new context, the NGC, creating an event specific focus rather than general sport fandom. The application of the scale to golf events is an important extension of the framework in the academic body of knowledge.

Supporting the SFMS, the experience economy theory (EET) was used to conceptualise the study, moving it beyond motivation only. The concept of the experience economy was first introduced by Pine and Gilmore in 1998 and presented that consumers seek holistic experiences when they are consuming goods and services. These experiences should either be entertaining, educational, escapist or aesthetic, or a combination of these (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The type and level of experience differs based on the level of absorption and immersion (meaning the level of impact of and involvement in the experience) and whether participation is active or passive (if individuals are participants or observers). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

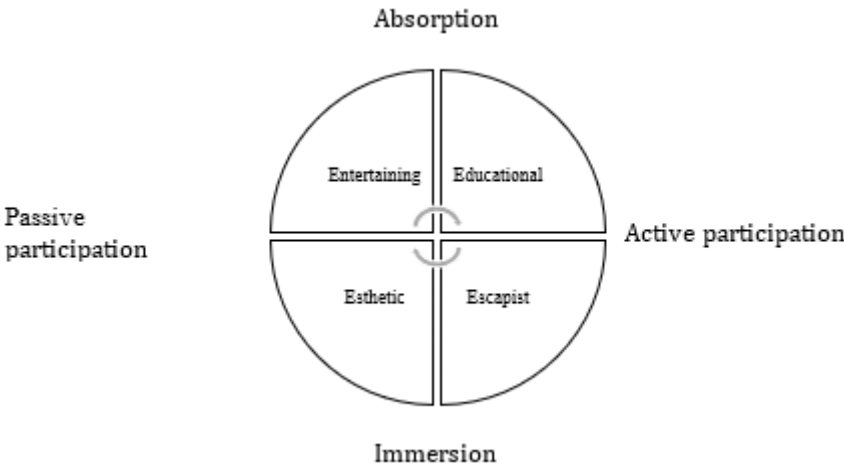


Figure 1. Experience economy theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1998)

Within the EET environment, entertainment is a passive experience based on enjoyment, social interaction and fun (McLellan, 2000); education is where learning takes place through the experiencing new things for the first time (Pine & Gilmore,

2011); escapism is the opportunity to leave ones real world (Henning & Vorderer, 2001); and the esthetic refers to passive immersion into an activity, which even bystanders can experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). When considered holistically, the four realms create memorable experiences, with the ideal experience incorporating all factors throughout the entire customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Tom et al., 2022). This theory allowed golf events to be conceptualised as holistic experiences, rather than a sport consumption product, which is especially relevant to the NGC where social interaction, lifestyle and the event atmosphere are key elements of the event attendee experience. The integration of the SFMS and the EET allowed for the empirical findings to be more deeply explained and understood and aligns with current research on sport tourism which has shifted to considering sport events as experience platforms. This also strengthened the practical relevance of the findings and enhanced the studies contribution to the African context.

Methods

A survey instrument was developed for primary data collection, informed by the SFMS. The survey contained four distinct sections: respondent demographics, tripographic characteristics, travel motivations, and sport tourism event behaviour. Demographic data encompassed gender, age, province of residence, educational attainment, employment status, monthly income, and household composition. Tripography, a classification methodology employed in tourism, hospitality, and event-related research, categorises consumers or participants based on conventional travel and event attributes (Abdelaziz et al., 2024). The tripographic variables incorporated into the survey included the nature of event attendance, group composition, prior event attendance, duration of travel, accommodation type, information sourcing methods for the event, event-related expenditure, and secondary activities undertaken during event attendance.

Regarding travel motivations, the survey drew upon the dimensions of the SFMS, incorporating a series of items designed to ascertain the motivations and behavioural intentions influencing attendance at the NGC. Motivational constructs were quantified using Likert-scale statements adapted from the SFMS. The survey was administered at the NGC event, with participants selected via convenience sampling. A representative sample of event attendees was chosen for participation, guided by historical event attendance figures. Only participants who affirmed being over 18 years of age were permitted to complete the survey. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality Ethics Committee.

Results

Data was analysed using SPSS Version 30. A total of 303 responses to the survey were received. This sample size exceeds the recommended threshold for exploratory factor analysis in tourism research, providing a subject to item ratio of above 10:1 (Hair et al., 2020). The demographics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (n=303)

		(%)
Gender	Female	37.3
	Male	62
	Other	0.3
	Prefer not to say	0.3
Age	18-25 years	16.8
	26-35 years	33.7
	36-45 years	29
	46-55 years	12.2
	56-65 years	5.9
	>65 years	2.3
Place of residence	Local resident	64
	Domestic tourist	34.7
	International tourist	1.3
Highest level of education	No formal schooling	1.7
	Primary schooling completed	0.7
	Secondary schooling completed	19.1
	Certificate/diploma	30
	Undergraduate degree	21.8
	Postgraduate degree	24.1
Employment status	Other	2.6
	Unemployed	13.2
	Working full time	55.1
	Working part time	7.6
	Retired/pensioner	4
	Self employed	17.2
	Home executive	1
Monthly income	Other	2
	Prefer not to say	21.8
	No income	8.6
	R0-R6 000	11.9
	R6 000 – R12 000	8.6
	R12 000 – R20 000	14.2
	>R20 000	35

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the sample were predominantly older, South African, educated, employed and which relatively high levels of income, which is consistent with existing profiles of golf tourists and participants. While most tourists were from the local area, a substantial number (36%) travelled from outside of the host region specifically to attend the event, demonstrating clear destination generating effects.

To identify the underlying dimensions that explain the patterns of relationship among the motivations items influencing event attendees, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the motivation related items included in the survey. Before the analysis was conducted, the suitability of the data was determined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60 (KMO>0.78), indicating that the sample size was adequate for factor analysis. Along with this, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p<0.001$), supporting the factorability of the correlation

matrix. Using principal component analysis (PCA) and the Kaiser criteria (eigenvalues greater than one) resulted in four factors being identified, with 63.4% of the total variance. Factors loadings ranged from 0.61 to 0.87. The extracted factors were named event excitement and spectator experience, social interaction and networking, prestige and event status and escape and leisure experience. The results of the EFA, showing the extracted factors, factor loadings, total variance extracted and eigenvalues presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of EFA

Items	Factor loading	% of variance	% cumulative variance	Eigenvalue
Factor 1: Event excitement and spectator experience		27.3	27.3	3.82
To experience the excitement of live golf	0.78			
To watch professional golfers compete	0.74			
To enjoy the event atmosphere	0.71			
To experience the thrill of the competition	0.69			
Factor 2: Social interaction and networking		17.2	44.5	2.41
Spending time with friends and family	0.76			
Socialising with other spectators	0.73			
Having a shared experience with others	0.70			
Networking	0.64			
Factor 3: Prestige and event status		11.4	55.9	1.96
To be a part of the good reputation of the event	0.71			
To attend a prestigious event	0.69			
To be a part of a high profile experience	0.66			
Factor 4: Escape and leisure experience		7.5	63.4	1.42
Escaping the daily routine	0.71			
To relax and enjoy leisure activities	0.68			
To enjoy a day out at a unique event	0.65			

The above EFA results reveal that the motives for golf event tourists in emerging destinations are multidimensional and strongly linked to the event itself rather than participation in the related sport. High factor loadings across all of the items confirm that respondents clearly differentiate between performance focussed, social, symbolic and destination related motivations. The prominence of social,

lifestyle and destination factors illustrate that for attendees, attendance at golf events is seen as a holistic experience, incorporating competition, social interaction, expression of identity and travel. This implies that these event attendees should be considered not only as sport participants, but as also event driven tourists, seeking integrated experiences. This demonstrates the significance of viewing golf tourism through an event lens.

Internal consistency analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the identified motivational constructs. The Cronbach's alpha values exceeds the threshold of 0.7, showing satisfactory internal consistency. The results confirm that the motivational scales used in the study provided a reliable measurement of respondent motivations within the context of an emerging destination.

Table 4. Internal consistency reliability results

Motivational construct	Number of items	Cronbach's (α)
Event excitement and spectator experience	4	0.86
Social interaction and networking	4	0.83
Prestige and event status	3	0.79
Escape and leisure experience	3	0.76

In addressing the study aim of examining the behaviours of golf event tourists, behavioural intention items were analysed, focussing on future golf event attendance, recommendations and intentions to revisit the event destination. Behavioural intention measures were selected as they are viewed as key predictors of destination loyalty and event legacy (Prayag et al., 2013). The results obtained show strong positive behavioural outcomes.

Table 5. Behavioural intentions of spectators

Behavioural intention	Mean	Standard deviation
I intend to attend this event again in the future	4.32	0.81
I would recommend this event to friends and family	4.41	0.74
I would like to visit this destination again because of the event	4.18	0.89
I would encourage others to attend this event	4.35	0.78
I would consider attending similar events	4.09	0.92

As presented in Table 5, respondents reported high levels of behavioural intention (highest $\bar{x}$ =4.41 to lowest $\bar{x}$ =4.09) on a five-point scale. was for Recommending the event to others had the highest mean score ($\bar{x}$ =4.41) and the lowest standard deviation (σ =0.74), suggesting that attendees had a highly positive and satisfying event experience and would therefore promote the event through positive word of mouth. Respondents also indicated a high likelihood of attending the event again in the future ($\bar{x}$ =4.32; σ =0.81), showing a high potential for repeat visitation and event loyalty. The findings demonstrate the potential of the golf event experience to extend beyond the event itself ($\bar{x}$ =4.18; σ =0.89), to shape perceptions and experiences of the greater destination. This confirms the destination generating role of golf events, particularly in emerging and developing contexts where strategic

destination development is key to social and economic development. When considered alongside the EFA on respondent motivations, the results indicate that motivations linked to social interaction and networking, lifestyle, prestige and status and destination and leisure experience are particularly important in developing post event perceptions and responses. The high scores of these motivational dimensions are linked to strong recommendations, and a strong likelihood to revisit, suggesting that experiential benefits are central to positive outcomes for attendees. Holistically, the findings of the study confirm that golf event tourism in an emerging destination supports future event and destination loyalty, underscoring the value of integrating sport, social and destination experiences in golf event design.

Discussion

The present study sought to ascertain the motivations and behavioural intentions of golf event tourists within an emergent destination, specifically focusing on event attendees and participants, rather than general golf tourists. The findings were interpreted through the prism of an emergent destination, acknowledging the increasing reliance of Global South destinations on hallmark events, such as the NGC, to bolster tourism, economic, and social development.

The EFA conducted on the study data revealed multidimensional motivational factors influencing golf event attendance, extending beyond traditional golf-related motivations such as sport participation. Specifically, motivations encompassed social interaction, event atmosphere, and destination appeal, underscoring that golf events are not solely sporting competitions but also avenues for experiential leisure activities and social connection. This aligns with extant research indicating that golf event attendees leverage these events as instruments for expressing social status, thereby accentuating the imperative of delivering gratifying golf event experiences wherein active involvement in experience creation is fostered (Kang et al., 2022). However, the study's findings suggest that, within the developing context, these motivations may be amplified, as hallmark golf events like the NGC further provide opportunities for engagement with the destination itself as an integral component of the event experience. This reinforces existing arguments that sport events in emergent destinations transcend mere sporting competitions, functioning also as leisure experiences, social platforms, and strategic tools for destination marketing (Tomino et al., 2020; Tomino & Peric, 2025). The findings corroborate the perspective that sport events are no longer standalone competitions. The salience of social and experiential motivations among attendees suggests that golf event organisers should cultivate engaging event atmospheres, such as hospitality areas and spaces for networking and fan engagement, to enhance the overall event experience.

Concomitantly, the findings are consistent with the burgeoning body of literature advocating for event portfolio strategies in destinations. A portfolio of events, such as the NGC, enables destinations to cultivate a diverse sport event tourism offering, augment destination image and visibility, and facilitate improved distribution of social and economic benefits across local communities (Ziakas, 2013; Ziakas, 2023). These portfolios subsequently constitute integral components of long-term event hosting strategies, which are indispensable for destination success,

integrating multiple events within existing tourism development frameworks (Richards, 2015; Getz, 2017). Richards (2015) and Getz (2017) further posit that destinations necessitate holistic event policies featuring portfolios of events with a long-term focus, synthesising multiple perspectives on value, event impacts, return on investment, and socio-cultural development. These portfolios should comprise a strategic selection of interrelated golf events that are complementary in terms of marketing, capacity, theme, and knowledge transfer (Ziakas, 2013; Ziakas, 2023). This approach will facilitate the attraction of a diverse range of markets and enable golf events to address unique community concerns at various host destinations, thereby supporting local social and economic development (Ziakas & Costa, 2011).

Within the context of golf event tourism, the findings suggest that individual flagship events, such as the NGC, could serve as an anchor event within a broader portfolio of golf events, encompassing other events such as tournaments, community festivals, and youth development initiatives. This approach also addresses the persistent issue of diversity and inclusion in golf event tourism, particularly concerning women and youth. A portfolio of golf events can assist in surmounting these challenges by bridging generational gaps and promoting golf events as accessible to all (Hindman et al., 2023). For such an endeavour to be successful, it is imperative that structures supporting stakeholder inclusiveness, governmental engagement, a system of accountability, bottom-up planning, and the consideration of local residents in all decision-making processes are in place (Ziakas, 2015; Jepson et al., 2013; Van Wynsberghe et al., 2011). Within the Global South, in particular, these governance mechanisms are essential to ensure that sport events yield positive socio-economic legacies for host communities and are not perceived as exclusive tourism products accessible only to an elite segment.

The results pertaining to behavioural intentions underscore the strategic importance of golf events, as they stimulate repeat visitation to a destination, encourage future event attendance, and foster positive word-of-mouth marketing. These results are consistent with other studies which have demonstrated that satisfaction levels with sport events and the fulfilment of attendee needs are robust predictors of destination loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Chen & Funk, 2010; Prayag et al., 2013). However, the current study extends this body of knowledge by demonstrating that behavioural intentions within the context of a golf event are not solely driven by sport-related factors but are also intimately linked to the social and experiential factors identified in the motivational analysis.

According to earlier research by Correia et al. (2007), the most significant determinants of repeat visitation among golf event visitors include housing, climate, price, mode of travel, quality, landscape, restaurants, accessibility, and price. All these aspects warrant consideration in the development of a holistic, sustainable, and successful golf event product. Although existing studies emphasise the importance of these factors and others such as course quality and climate (Brown & Yuri, 2020; Panthasupkul, 2021; Cristovao, 2022), the present findings demonstrate that additional factors, including lifestyle enjoyment and social interaction, are equally important in the event context, aligning more closely with sport event tourism research than with that conducted in the traditional golf tourism domain. This

highlights a crucial distinction between traditional golf tourism and golf event tourism, where motivations for the latter are more closely aligned with broader sport event tourism motivations.

The elevated levels of intention for repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth are particularly significant in the context of emergent and developing destinations, where positive word-of-mouth plays a pivotal role in destination growth and reputation development. Unlike mature destinations, where destination image and reputation are already well-established, in emergent and developing destinations, it is evident that golf events can play a key role in shaping visitor perceptions and behaviours, and in profiling host destinations. The alignment that emerged between motivational constructs and behavioural intentions in this study supports the argument that, when strategically deployed, sport events can act as catalysts for long-term tourism development, particularly in destinations endeavouring to position themselves strategically within the global sport event tourism market.

The study offers several contributions to the golf tourism and sport event tourism bodies of knowledge. Firstly, it contributes to a relatively limited body of work examining golf event tourism in the Global South and in an emergent destination by providing empirical insights from the NGC. Secondly, by applying a motivational framework to the context of golf event tourism, the study demonstrates that golf event tourists are motivated by multidimensional factors encompassing sport, social, experiential, and destination-related aspects. Finally, the study underscores the important relationship between motivations and behavioural intentions, illustrating how positive event experiences contribute to event and destination loyalty. Practically, the study's findings suggest that stakeholders involved in golf event tourism should recalibrate their focus from the event specifically to the creation of holistic event experiences that integrate social interaction, destination experiences, and lifestyle factors. This shift in focus will ensure visitor satisfaction, encourage repeat visitation, and guarantee the long-term sustainability of golf event tourism in emergent destinations.

Conclusion

This study sought to ascertain the motivations and behaviours of golf event tourists within an emergent destination, primarily focusing on event attendees and participants, thereby introducing a specific event-centric perspective into extant golf tourism research. The empirical evidence derived from this study indicates that golf event tourists in emergent destinations are propelled by a multifaceted combination of factors, extending beyond the confines of golf and the event itself. By applying an event-focused lens, this research underscores the salience of experiential, destination-related, and social dimensions of golf tourism, elucidating their influence on behavioural intentions, including repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth promotion.

In so doing, this study contributes to the academic discourse that positions sport events as pivotal instruments for tourism development in emergent destinations, where such events can fulfil a strategic role. Within these contexts, sport

events can serve as platforms for destination marketing and branding, facilitate the diversification of the tourism product, and act as catalysts for domestic travel. The findings of this study underscore the significance of golf events as mechanisms for tourism and event destination development, offering a foundational basis for subsequent investigations. Furthermore, the study reveals how golf events can be leveraged as experiential tourism products that seamlessly integrate sport, socialisation, lifestyle pursuits, and engagement with a specific destination.

Theoretically, this study makes a valuable contribution by integrating an event-focused motivational framework within the existing body of golf tourism research, diverging from conventional studies that primarily emphasise golf participation. The findings of the current study demonstrate that golf event tourists are motivated by a broad spectrum of experiential factors, thereby highlighting the imperative for a more holistic conceptualisation of these tourist profiles, encompassing event, sport, and tourism perspectives. The profile developed for the golf event tourist at the NGC event incorporated both behavioural and motivational factors, presenting opportunities for these events to be strategically leveraged to attract tourism and event-related development to lesser-known regions that lie outside traditional tourism routes. This aligns with the South African government's priorities concerning the promotion of domestic tourism and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits to less developed areas, thereby fostering economic development and growth. Consequently, the findings of this study illustrate that golf events can support national development strategies in emergent destinations.

Moreover, insights into the profiles of golf event tourists in South Africa can assist regional and national policymakers, as well as sport stakeholders, in assessing the levels of accessibility and diversity within golf events and determining their efficacy in achieving transformation agendas. The study's findings indicate that golf event tourists are motivated by factors that extend considerably beyond existing golf tourism models and profiles, to encompass elements pertaining to social interaction, sport, and the destination itself. These findings provide empirical support for the hosting of golf events as instruments for social and economic development, thereby strengthening the nexus between research, policy, and society. More broadly, the outcomes of this study also illustrate how niche sport events can support tourism product diversification in emergent destinations where, when strategically employed, events can play a role in cultivating destination image, competitiveness, and engagement.

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study offer guidelines for stakeholders in destination marketing and event hosting, suggesting that their marketing endeavours must present potential attendees with a holistic event experience, replete with opportunities for social interaction, an engaging event atmosphere, and an attractive host destination. These factors should also be meticulously considered in the design of the event and in programme development, to create opportunities for networking, socialising, and tourism-related activities. Furthermore, these stakeholders should contemplate offering complementary tourism experiences, such as local cultural tourism experiences and destination

excursions, within the event programme to enhance event attendee satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation.

Several limitations inherent in the current study warrant acknowledgement. Firstly, the study adopted a single event focus, thereby circumscribing the generalisability of the findings to other golf events within the South African context. The findings may also be influenced by the specific location, audience profile, and prestige of the NGC event. Secondly, the survey administered at the event captured a snapshot in time and, consequently, is unable to track longitudinal changes in motives, behaviours, or repeat visitation. In light of this, the study cannot ascertain how these factors evolve and develop over extended periods. As the study relied on a self-completed survey, there exists a potential for response bias, which may not fully encapsulate visitor experiences, motivations, and behaviours. An additional limitation is the study's primary focus on visitor motivations and behavioural intentions, without due consideration of additional stakeholder perspectives, such as those of local businesses and event organisers.

Future research should endeavour to conduct comparative analyses of attendee profiles across multiple golf events, extending to longitudinal tracking of spectators to provide more robust evidence of repeat visitation, destination loyalty, and the long-term legacies of golf events. Subsequent studies should also investigate the integration of golf events into local and national tourism development and sustainability strategies. Future investigations could explore environmental and social sustainability practices to align golf events with South Africa's transformation and sustainability agendas. Additional research could specifically examine the environmental and social sustainability practices implemented at golf events. Research can be further extended to other African or developing contexts where empirical evidence remains scarce. Comparative studies can be undertaken between emergent and developed golf event tourism destinations to ascertain how motivations and behaviours diverge in these disparate contexts. Such studies would significantly contribute to the accumulation of a more robust body of knowledge concerning niche sport events and tourism development in the Global South.

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