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**RUSSIAN GOLF PROFILE WITH THE
PERSPECTIVE OF GOLF TOURISM IN SOUTH
EAST ASIA**

Bachelor's Thesis 2010

ABSTRACT

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Russian Golf Profile with the Perspective of Golf Tourism in South East Asia, 59 pages, 1 appendix

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The aim of the study was to formulate Russian golf profile and evaluate it from the perspective of golf tourism in South East Asian countries concentrating on five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore. The research discovered and analyzed the factors that accelerate and prevent Russian golf players from traveling to South East Asia region with golf and tourism purposes. In the theoretical part of the study the main issue was to describe the current situation of golf in Russia and based on this create the conceptualization of the studied profile. The issue considered the importance of golf for Russian golf players and examined it as a potential motivator to travel abroad. The research was able to reveal attractive factors of golf destinations from Russian golf players' point of view.

The methodology of the research included study of secondary data such as books, scientific articles, publications and press releases. The empirical part was done by interviewing several Russian golf players and analyzing the information taken from latest discussions on online Russian golf forums. The qualitative approach of the study provided deep understanding of the studied phenomena.

The results of the study show that Russian golf profile has features typical for modern golf profiles. This reveals the high extent of golf industry presence. An extremely high tempo of golf development in Russia was explained by high involvement of Russian government in the promoting and popularization of golf in the country. The study confirmed that Russian golf players for whom golf is a lifestyle exist and the hobby often is a strong motive to travel abroad. The most attractive factors for Russian golfers in golf tourism destinations were found and further South East Asia was examined for the presence of such factors. Russian golf profile is still formulating, but South East Asia is a very perspective golf tourism destination for current and future Russian golf players.

Keywords: sport tourism, golf tourism, golf market, Russian golf profile, South East Asia, consumer behaviour

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Appendix 1 Preliminary structure of interview with golf players

1 INTRODUCTION

The report is going to present results of the final research thesis conducted on the topic “Russian golf profile with the perspective of golf tourism in South East Asia.” The research is examining the opportunity of special segment – Russian golfers to maintain their hobby inside the countries of South East Asia, which have excellent facilities for golf. Geographically, fifteen countries comprise the respected part of the world, however, the research is concentrated on golf in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore, since they are the golf tourism leaders compared to other South East Asia countries. The topic implies contemplation of the combination of factors which accelerate or prevent Russian golf tourists to travel to the respected region. The issue also considers the current situation of Russian golf tourists, attractiveness of the region to them; attempts to find possible solution for attracting existing players from Russia to South East Asia. The case is relatively new and therefore interesting to study.

Golf tourism is a developing sector nowadays all over the world. It grows rapidly in South East Asia and becomes more and more popular in Russia. Golf in Russia is only twenty one years old, which is extremely young comparing with numerous countries; however, it has a tendency of a relatively vast growth. South East Asian climate is a paradise for golf players and offers opportunities for holding competitions.

Despite the fact that Russian golf is still in abysmal condition, compared to such world golf leaders like the USA and Europe, Russian golf profile is a perspective one. There are numerous golf clubs across the country, and their number is increasing annually. Golf as a hobby becomes interesting to a larger amount of Russians. More and more Russian golf players are entering the world golf league and become competitive. There are special forums and online discussions among Russian golfers with a constitutive number of members, which can be found on the Internet. However, because of the Russian climate, players can maintain their hobby only during the summer season inside the

country. Therefore there is an existent demand for Russian golfers to travel. Confirming the previous statement that golf tourism is possible to develop to a higher level, let us represent downhill skiing as a sport tourism example. If we look fifteen years back, this hobby was not popular among a significant part of Russian population, however, by now, downhill skiing tourism is in great request among all other branches of sport tourism (Federation of downhill skiing and snowboarding in Russia, 2009).

South East Asia is an attractive tourism destination in virtue of unique beauty, culture, climate and diversity. Despite the long distance, Russians do travel to this region; and as mentioned previously, it offers a multitude of superior golf facilities and tourists are able to combine their holiday with golf. This appears as a possibility to become a platform for travelling and golf tourism.

The study cannot be considered irrelevant, since the problem, attempted to be solved, is real and resolution is possible to find. Golfers are typically described a rich segment, therefore they have an opportunity to travel far in order to play golf.

The conducted research is supposed to be a practical tool for the company "Asia Tour Deals", while adding value in their tour operator business. "Asia Tour Deals" is a Singaporean tour operator and their main segment so far is Russian clients. Therefore, the topic is about Russian golf players and perspective of their travelling to South East Asia including Singapore.

Finally, as mentioned previously, golf tourism is a growing sector; therefore studies should be conducted in this field. In addition, Russia is an extremely interesting case, because the level of golf and referred businesses is not high yet, which means the research is useful to do. Considering all facts mentioned previously, the topic provides plenty of issues to cover, problems to find and to solve, knowledge to get and experience to receive.

The aim of the research is to deeply explore Russian Golfers' profile, their consumer behaviour as tourists concerning the choice of holiday destination

along with golf relation, their current opinion and expectations about golf tourism to South East Asia and travelling to the region. Since the segment of Russian golf players is extremely small, several target representatives reached, can be considered a significant and practical data received. Geographical delimitation of Russian golfers is restricted in virtue of exclusivity of golf in Russia. The majority of interested people dwell inside biggest cities – Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. Hence most of the analyzed representatives in the empirical part of the research come from these areas.

The goal is to estimate the current golf situation in Russia and thus, basing on the data, lead the relevant concepts across the research. Relevant concepts include demand for travelling for golf to the area, purchasing decisions of the segment, applicable distribution and marketing tools, which are reachable for representatives.

The respected study looks at South East Asia as a potential golf tourism destination for Russian golfers. As mentioned previously, the case South East Asia is delimited to five countries to explore, in terms of golf tourism facilities and opportunities. The goal is to find out how attractive the region looks for tourists who would play golf, what the region can offer in terms of holidays and golf combined. Therefore the study looks at South East Asia as a tourism destination in general and observes what can attract golf tourists to the area.

2 SPORT TOURISM

2.1 General characteristics of sport tourism

The number of world tourist arrivals is predicted to grow annually by 4.3 per cent and international tourism monetary contribution is expected to rise annually at 6.7 per cent (WTO 2001, according to Hudson 2003, 1). Sport tourism is one of the quickest growing segments affecting such striking statistics (Hudson 2003, 1). Sport tourism implies leaving the permanent residence place in order

to play sport, see sport or to attend a sport attraction (Hudson 2003, xvii). There are numerous definitions for sport tourism. For instance Ritchie & Adair (2004, 8) describe sport tourism as traveling away from home in order to participate in sport in an active way or in a passive way, where active way examples are scuba diving and golf, and where passive way implies visiting sport events and museums and it can represent examples when either tourism or sport are the main activities. Pitts (1999) confirms the core of this concept and states that there are two types of sport tourism – participation and spectatorial (Ritchie & Adair 2004, 8).

There are five main sport tourism elements, which introduce the supply side of the concept of sport tourism: attractions, resorts, cruises, tours and events. Sport tourism attractions are places that introduce to the tourist things to see and participate in related sport activities. The main features in sport tourism attraction concept include visiting famous sport facilities, which used to operate or currently are operating in holding big sport events, special sport museums and halls of fame which represent rich history and heritage of sport, sport theme parks such as water parks, paths for hiking made in order to enjoy nature and, finally, visiting sport shops. Sport tourism resorts are integrated resorts in which sport and health are considered to be focus elements and a marketing strategy. Such resorts provide tourists with sport equipment and facilities and with opportunity to do sports under experienced instructor's supervision. Golf and tennis resorts are examples of this sport tourism element. Sport tourism cruises include all trips on boats during which sport activities play the major role. For the outstanding customer satisfaction, sport cruise managers organize special transportation for tourists in order to offer them various sport activities such as golf, snorkeling, waterskiing and others. Sport tourism tours are meant to take tourist to their favorite sport destination, facility or event in the world. Travel companies can organize sport tours for "addicted" sport fans in which they are able to follow their team during some contest. In such cases companies take care of flight tickets, hotel staying of sport tourists, include, for example, meetings with team members in a sport tour schedule. Companies that organize sport tours for professional athletes teams and youth sportsmen are also examples of sport tours providers. Sport tourism event element implies

travelling in order to attend an event which attracts large numbers of spectators or participants. For many people, attending a sport event is a regular activity in life and at the same time an unforgettable experience comprising an opportunity to spend great time with friends. (Hudson 2003, 3-13).

Tourism industry had been going through a number of changes. Thus a transformation from “old tourism” to “new tourism” can be traced. The concepts of “old” and “new” tourism had been introduced by Auliana Poon (1993). The main characteristics of “old tourism” include mass, standard and strictly packaged holidays, when “new tourism” is typified more as a flexible, with well segmented markets industry directed towards real tourism experience. Changes in consumer preferences, their leisure time, income allocation and work prototypes affected the evolution of “new tourism”. Correctly segmented markets and tailored holiday products are becoming continuously more significant in tourism industry. New tourists seek for personalized services and are concerned with conservation of natural resources. Variety and diversification of customer needs require a different approach to segmentation with complex clusters of potential clients, which means precision in identifying markets is the key factor. Sport tourism market is one of these new markets. Flexibility in the choice and booking options are vital for new tourists. They seek for various options in purchasing and paying the holidays. Information communication technologies developed in order to fill the demand for the flexibility. Computer reservation systems, for instance, are an evident example. (Cooper 2003, 130-134).

Sport tourism definitely has a relation with wellness tourism. Wellness tourists are those who seek for opportunity to maintain and advance their health during holidays (Behrens 2009, 6). New lifestyle (wellness lifestyle) became popular since people realized the necessity to be looking good constantly, losing weight, postponing ageing results and generally improving health condition. The respected segment desires to change their lifestyle, thus creates new patterns of consumer behaviour which affected industries’ product development, including tourism. (Behrens 2009, 6-13).

2.2 Sport tourists and their classification

Sport tourists are defined in various ways. Basically, sport tourists are those who participate in either active or passive way in organized or non-organized sport activities, with commercial or non-commercial motives, away from home or work surrounding. Gammon and Robinson (1997) categorize sport tourists in two types, named “hard” and “soft”, where a “hard” sport tourist’s primary interest is sport and he participates actively or passively in competitive sports, while a “soft” tourist’s major interest is leisure, rather than involvement in a competitive sport. (Ritchie & Adair 2004, 8).

Maier and Weber (1993) introduce four sport tourist types as demand groups, basing on the extent of sport involvement on their holidays. Below Table 1 illustrates the division of sport tourist demand groups and typical features of each.

Table 1 Sport tourist demand groups and their characteristics

Top performance athletes	Mass sport participants	Occasional sport participants	Passive sport tourists
-professional sport facilities	-keeping fit	-prefer less demanding sports	-do not participate in sport
-suitable admission for competition	-maintaining health	-give preference to sightseeing and cultural activities	-observe
-quality of supporting elements			-e.g. athlete’s coach, media representatives

The first demand group unites top performance athletes, for whom productivity is the crucial aspect during the holidays. Professional sport facilities for training,

suitable admission to the competition and quality of supporting elements such as restaurant and healthcare points are important factors that influence their productivity. The second demand group unites mass sports participants, for whom keeping fit and maintaining health are crucial targets during the holidays. The next demand group represents occasional sport participants, who do not place sport as a crucial activity in their traveling and give preference to cultural and sightseeing activities. Representatives of this group tend to prefer less demanding sports. The last demand group comprises of passive sport tourists, who do not actually participate in sport, but either observe it, or are related to the activity due to professional roles such as athlete's coach or media representative. (Hinch & Higham 2004, 34-35).

Gibson (2006, 13) generalizes that Sport tourists are those for whom sport is a significant indicator in their travel experience. Professional athletes, their coaches, sport event viewers, media representatives are examples of sport tourists.

2.3 Golf tourism

Golf tourism concept implies traveling away from home in order to play golf and/or to observe golf (Hudson 2003, 166). The more complex definition according to Tourism Victoria (2003) states that golf tourism is an activity or an overnight trip on which a golf player is traveling at least one hour from one's residence or a golf club/course, where golf is a primary motivator for traveling, or golf is the most important factor in choosing the destination, or golf will appear to be the major activity during the trip (Tassiopoulus & Haydam, 2006, 872).

The development of golf resulted in golf becoming the hugest sport travel market nowadays. There are plenty of hypothesis concerning the country that originated golf, however, the first official mentioning of golf was in Scottish history. The game was popular among Scottish and English aristocracy. They created a very unique and luxurious status for the game, by producing private golf clubs, high etiquette and dress code standards, so that ordinary people

would not be able to break into this sport. Golf started to spread along with Great Britain expanding its occupations. Because of the British army, many golf clubs were open and golf courses built outside Great Britain – in India, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Australia and New Zealand between the years 1820 and 1871. Further on golf reached the American region, which was a premise in golf boom that occurred in the late nineties. The USA government was strongly financing golf facilities and attempted rewarding the game's status with mass sport status. Golf received a lot of attention from the media as well and in the end gained much popularity. The same pattern of development was followed in Japan, France, Spain and other countries. The formation of various golf tours lead consequently to the development of golf tourism. (Hudson, 2003, 166-171).

There are four types of golf tourism products, which were identified by Priestley and Ashworth (1995). They include famous championship courses (also called trophy courses), single integrated resorts, golf courses associated with property developments and networks of courses forming golf regions. Trophy courses are golf courses that host professional or international golf competitions and are desired by wealthy golfers due to the opportunity to play on the same course as champions did. Such golf market products have long term attractiveness status for golfers and increase number of golf tourists to the area due to the championships' fame. However, regular golf players may find such courses too difficult, which can result in decrease of demand for the course. A single integrated golf resort is a complex which comprises at least one golf course, accommodation and supporting facilities such as restaurant etc. Nowadays such resorts are facilitated with several golf courses, retail shops, karaoke lounges and various sport facilities. The main segment of such resort is wealthy golfers, who prefer all-inclusive packages designed for spending inside the resort. Golf courses associated with property development imply building a golf course initially and further selling away the territory for tenure development. The respected type of product is designed for golfers who are likely to purchase an alternative accommodation for themselves or a time-share tenure. The last golf product type – networks of courses, previously developed separately, but further marketed together and forming golf regions, is designed in order to influence golf players to purchase a combination of accommodations and golf

courses in the region, thus affecting the increase of money consumption inside the area. (Hudson, 2003, 176-180).

2.4 Golf tourists and their classification

It is relatively complicated to categorize and conceptualize golf tourists compared to golf tourism theory. The constitution of golf tourists still seems quite unclear. However, several ideas about the typology of golf travelers are presented.

Golf tourists, according to Golf 20/20 (2004), can be divided into three standard categories: avid golf players, business traveler golfers and family golfers. The avid golfer is the one who plays more than 25 rounds per year, bases one's travel planning on golf as a primary activity during the trip, and is seeking for high-quality and notorious golf facilities. Avid golf players take into consideration the accessibility of average and high-priced accommodation, night life density and restaurants' availability. The described golf tourist normally prefers traveling during off-peak season. A business traveler golfer is also called a "core" golfer and is the one who plays about 8-24 rounds during business trips on attractive golf courses allied to hotels or conference centers. Family golf traveler also called "occasional" golfer, is the one who plays about 1-7 rounds per year and does not base travel destination decisions based just on golf facilities, but considers golf a possible activity during the holidays. This kind of golfer is attracted to mid-priced golf facilities which are suitable for variously skilled golfers. It is important for a family golf tourist to find a range of outdoor and family activities at the golf destination. Additionally, they seek for both: average and highly priced accommodation. (Tassiopoulus & Haydam, 2006 872).

Weed and Bull (2004) state that golf tourists are characterized by their motivations and behaviours. Figure 1.1 demonstrates a typological classification of golf tourists basing on initial division of such into participant and associate categories from which sub prototypes are identified, developed and described.

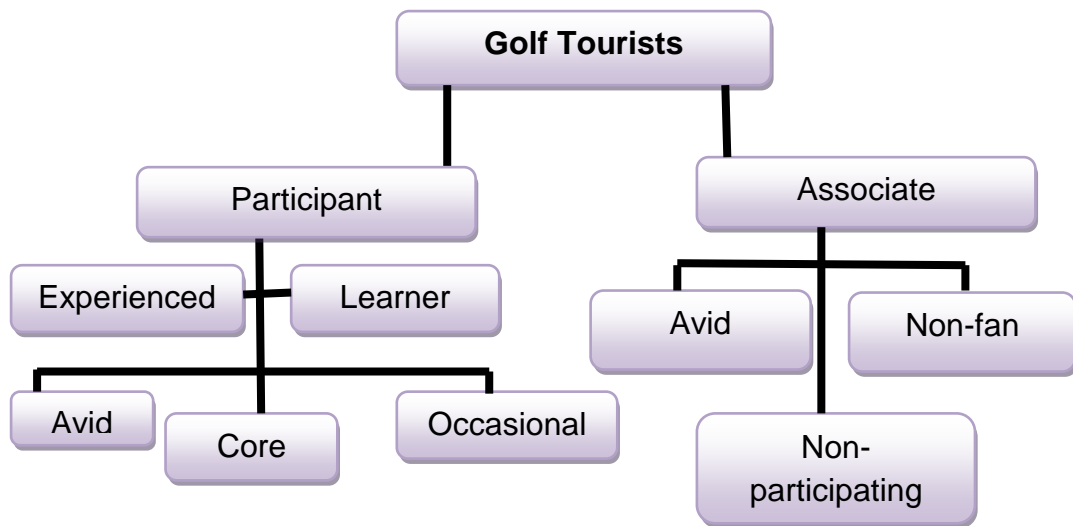


Figure 1 Typology of golf tourists (adapted from Weed & Bull, 2004)

There are two types of participant golf tourists: experienced and a learner. A learner utilizes the trip to learn to play golf better. Participant golf tourists consider the presence of golf facilities and additional services such as golf training at the destination in order to actively participate. Novelty is a very important factor for golf tourists: the novelty of a different kind of vacations is attractive for some golfers when the novelty of a new golf course in a “collection”, is charming for another category of golfers and motivates them. Commonly, golf profile is not likely to include family groups. The associate golf tourist type is relatively hard to identify, but Weed and Bull (2004) relate this term to golf tourists who are concerned with post activities at the golf course and find those activities more captivating than the sport itself. Associate golf tourists are categorized into three sub-categories: avid, non-fan and non-participating. An avid associate fan is a person heavily interested in golf and is different from golf fan who is somehow interested in golf whether he participates in it or not. A non-fan does not have any interest in golf, when non-participating fan is the person who is interested in golf to some extent, but is not participating. Examples of non-participating golf fans are TV viewers, who are

likely to become real golf travelers in future. Golf TV viewers can also be categorized into avid, core and occasional, depending on the number of the tournaments they watch per annum. These sub-categories represent latent, but yet a significant part of the golf market. (Tassiopoulus & Haydam, 2006 872-873).

3 GOLF TOURISM MARKET

Sport and adventure tourism is an emerging tourism market sector. Many companies which specialize in organizing sport and extreme tours nowadays pay deep attention to the sector in question. For companies which specialize in golf tourism, there is a need for specific services such as transportation to golf clubs, extensive knowledge of existing golf resorts and personal connections which assist in golf fields reservations. In order to maintain such a specific level of service, the company needs professional personnel consisting of golf enthusiasts. (International leisure world magazine 2006, issue 2, 5-6).

3.1 International golf tourism market

Golf without doubt is one of the key developing areas in tourism. Golf nowadays can be played all over the world (Hudson, 2004, 180). Golf tourism market was noticed to grow by 8 per cent during years 1998-1999 and now is estimated at 10 billion US dollars annually, which makes golf tourism the largest sport-related tourism market, supported by its own trade association – International Association of golf tour operators (IAGTO). (Tassiopoulus & Haydam 2006, 872).

International Association of golf tour operators was established in 1997 to be representative for several internationally leading golf tour operators. The goal of golf tourism is to provide continuous pleasure to millions of golf players annually around the world and the IAGTO is supporting the industry to achieve the described aim. The IAGTO sets its mission “to represent the interests of its

members and the global golf tourism industry, to create business opportunities for operators and industry partners, to raise awareness of its members' golf tourism products and services, to promote implementation of best practices in the golf tourism industry, to generate and improve access to valuable market information and to further the development of golf travel worldwide". (IAGTO 2010).

There are about 32,000 existent golf courses around the world and 56 million golf players using them. According to International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO), the world golf tourism market is estimated at 11.5 billion Euros. Still, golf represents great growth potential with only 1 per cent of population playing currently. In contrast, in the USA 10 per cent of population are considered golf players. Thus, the distribution of golfers worldwide is quite uneven. Figure 2 demonstrates the spreading of golfers by region in 2006.(VisitScotland).

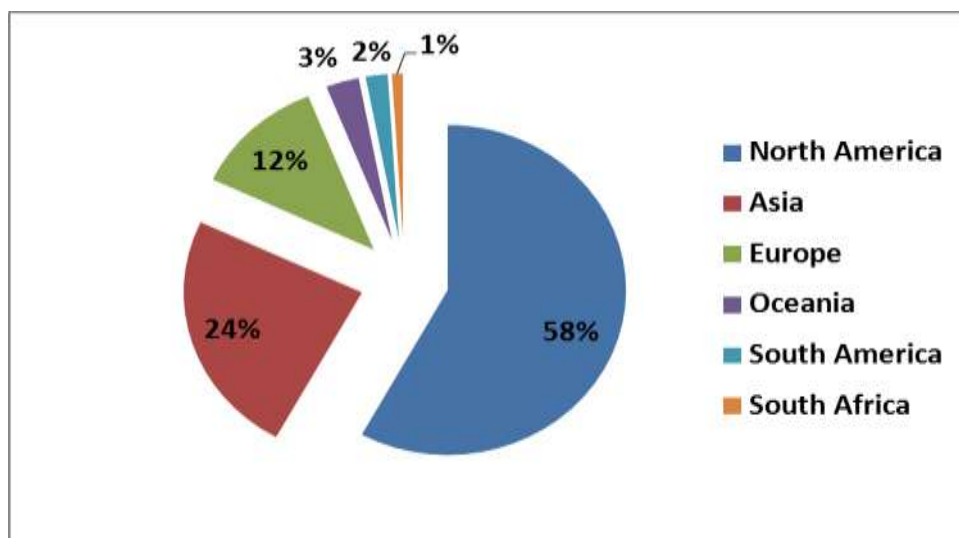


Figure 2 Spreading of golfers by region 2006 (VisitScotland according to Golf Digest)

The USA is a golf market leader with about 17,108 golf courses and 26.7 million golf players, among which 13 million are core golf players, which play at least 8 rounds of golf per year. Asia estimates about over 17 million golfers with 13 million contributors from Japan. However, Asia is inferior to Europe in the number of golf courses with only 3,985 courses. Europe contributes with 8

million golfers, among which 4000 million are registered players, and with around 6000 golf courses. (Visit Scotland 2006).

The majority of golf tourism in the United States is domestic travel with short, organized trips with three or four rounds of golf included. The Americans who travel abroad to play golf mostly prefer Mexico, Canada, the Bahamas, Aruba, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia as their destinations. International trips are rather “one time chance” trips and golfers are motivated by visiting trophy courses. In Europe, golf tourism is created by Northern-Europe golf population who travel to the South to reach warmer conditions to play, and by European golf payers striving to visit popular courses in Ireland and Great Britain. As previously mentioned, Japan is the key golf contributor in Asia, and nowadays, with the development of golf, they are facing the problem of dominance of the number golf players compared to the number of golf courses. Therefore, golf tourism in Asia is contributed heavily by Japanese golf players traveling to neighboring regions to get an opportunity to play. The Far East is now marketed to the rest of the world as an inexpensive golf destination. Australia is a target for international golf tourists as it boasts about worldwide famous trophy courses, pursued heavily by Japanese, Singaporean, Korean and other golf players coming from neighboring countries. South American golf tourism is not yet developed to the same extent as other regions and is growing relatively slowly. As previously mentioned, golf tourism mostly is supported by Americans who are coming to golf courses in Mexico and Colombia. Argentina, though, reveals the best increase in golf development within South America. South Africa is attempting to become a golf tourism target for British, Dutch and Australasian segments, by promoting tailored products and marketing wildlife, landscape and climate unique for golf. The famous trophy course – Gary Player Country Club is an attractive golf resort as it holds one of the most famous golf tournaments. (Hudson 2004, 180-187).

3.2 Russian golf and golf tourism markets

Golf in Russia is an emerging market and is relatively young. The history of Russian golf began with the opening the first golf club in Moscow in 1988. Two

years later, the first 9 - hole course was opened in the center of the city. A very important step in golf market creation was made in 1992, when Russian Golf Association (RGA) was founded and recognized by the Russian Olympic Committee, European Golf Association and St Andrews golf club. The very active golf market development stage came during the years 2004-2006, when building of golf courses thrived. (Ecogroup.ru 2009).

The Russian golf market has been growing rapidly since 2003. An estimated market value in 2003 was 107 million US dollars, in contrast the value of 1.7 billion US dollars in 2007. The main contributors in a market's growth are named to be investments in building golf courses and supporting infrastructure, selling and renting of golf property, procurement and rent of golf equipment and golf tourism. Thus, the economic value of golf market in Russia grew 28 times. (Russian Golf Association, press conference 2009).

There are about 50 thousand golf players in Russia, but only 49 players are golf masters and candidates. Four players constantly participate in international competitions. More than 1000 children train in 13 existent golf academies and schools. There are 157 golf courses functioning or being constructed. The growth of Russian golf market for the period 2003-2008 appeared to be 76%. (Russian Golf Association 2009).

Russian Golf Association members consist of 13 regional federations, 200 natural persons and 13 legal persons. The Association annually holds over 20 Russian and international golf competitions. The RGA is responsible for the development of golf in Russia. During the years 2003-2007 Russian Golf Association's main activities were promoting golf to Russian federal regions, recognition and certification of golf and mini golf courses according to international standards, penetration and adaptation of a single handicap system to Russia, creation and development of a single results evaluation system for golfers and mini golfers, penetration and adaptation of international golf and mini golf rules to Russia, organization and holding golf competitions in the territory of Russia, organization of Russian golfers' participation in international competitions, supporting preparation and training of professional golf players,

searching and involving investors in building golf infrastructure, enforcement of international cooperation, promoting golf broadly via media and popularization of golf among Russian citizens. According to the RGA statistics, by the year 2007 there were about 47 thousand players, among which 32 thousand are mini golf players. An estimated number of professional golf players is 27. (Russian Golf Association, report 2003-2007).

During the years 2003-2007 the number of golf players increased 30 times. Figure 3 shows the dynamics of growth of Russian golf players each year and proves the vast development.

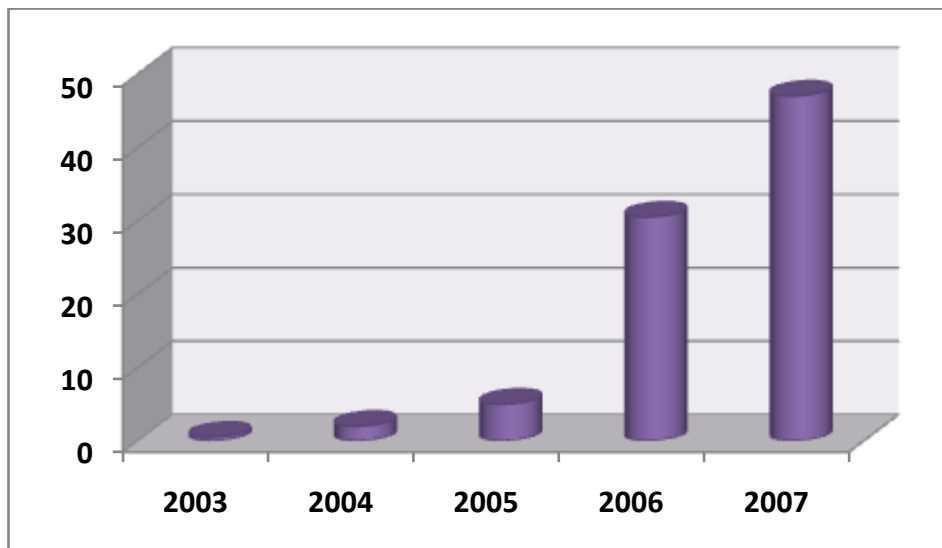


Figure 3 The dynamics of growth of Russian golf players (thousand people)
(Russian Golf Association Report 2003-2007)

Starting from only 1000 players in 2003, the number grew up to 47000 representatives in 2007. The biggest increase was noted in 2006 where the difference in the number of players compared to the previous year appeared to be 26000. A stable and visible continuing growth from 31000 players in 2006 to 47000 golfers in 2007 demonstrates that the trend is not a one - time phenomenon, but the result of continuous work and maintained interest towards golf.

Russian Golf Association thoroughly planned and actively developed program plans to develop the dynamics of growth of Russian golf players in future. Modern Russian political stability, economic growth and constantly increasing population's income create propitious conditions for constructing golf facilities and supportive infrastructure. Therefore the RGA predicts the number of golf players to grow relatively stable, though quite considerably. Figure 4 represents the planned results for the period of 2008-2012 and illustrates the predicted trend.

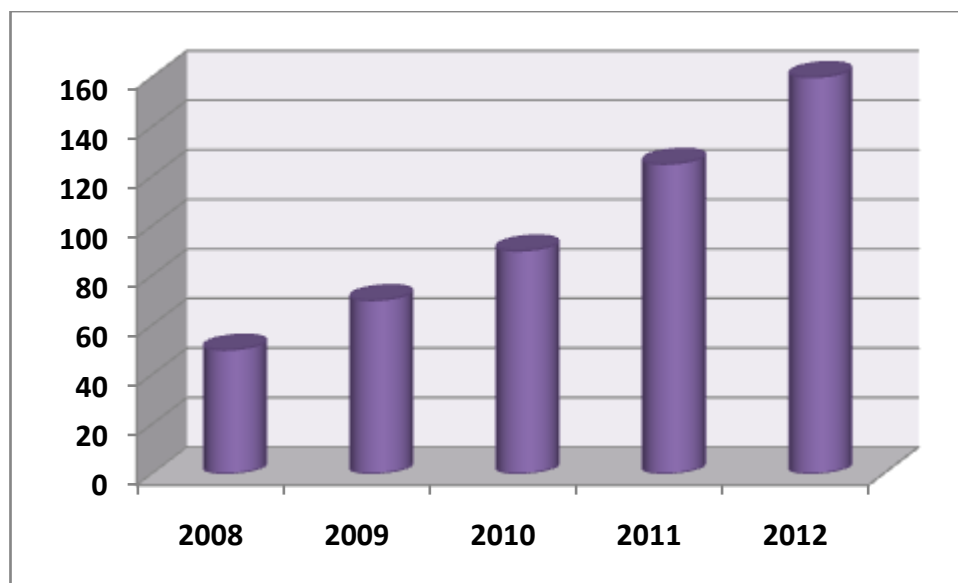


Figure 4 The dynamics of growth of Russian golf players (thousand people) (Russian Golf Association Report 2008-2012)

It is visible from the figure that GA aims at 160000 golf players by 2012, however, it shows that the growth is planned to be even.

The RGA is hoping to achieve such venturesome results by implementing a number of actions designed for the program of general development of golf in Russia. The program in question includes multiple aspects such as development and design of regional golf representatives across the Federation, improvement of golf courses' certification system, creation of professional golf system in Russia and development and implementation of golf courses' construction program. The major aspects of the program affecting and directed to the growth of golf players in Russia, are elaboration of golf competition

system, creation of the unique system of qualified golf personnel preparation and the realization of children and junior golf development. The elaboration of golf competition system includes RGA's mission to participate or/and to assist in holding at least 20 Russian and international golf competition events, including Russian golf championships, Russian mini golf championships, European Cup round – Russian Open, European Cup round – Russian Seniors Open, Russian Cup and Russian amateur golf players' championship among middle and senior age categories – 35-54 and over 55 years old corresponding. The increase in the range of competitions and tuning of its holdings is supposed to increase the number of interested active participants. The creation of professional golf personnel preparation program is planned to expand at all levels of education starting from high school, which implies designing and development of special educational programs which will lead to increase the number of golf concerned population. Finally, the development of children and junior golf program is extremely significant, especially in the case of Russia, since golf is a very young sport. With the growing number of constructed golf courses and increased number of professional golf personnel, the involvement of children and youngsters in golf will be possible. The program's actions are going to be directed to the inclusion of golf into State Educational Standard, penetration of golf into high school educational curriculum, developing of program to educate Physical Education teachers golf-wise, assisting in redesigning school sport facilities for golf and mini golf constructions and building multiple golf facilities in the nearest surrounding with schools. A special accent is also to be put on students' golf development by undertaking similar actions towards polytechnics, colleges and universities. (Kozhevnikov 2009).

Golf finally was included in Olympic sport program on 9 October 2009 according to the decision made at the 13th Olympic Congress in Copenhagen (Denmark) (Fontanka.ru). This transformation inspired the Russian Government to put more emphasis on golf itself and find out methods to put effort into accelerating its development by Olympic Games so that Russian golf team would be present there and would be worthily competitive. The topic became especially of an immediate interest after the recent failure of Russian team at Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. The main reasons for the failure were named to be lack

of participants from younger generation and little presence of Russian athletes in sport disciplines. Russians objectively were competitive only in figure skating, biathlon, ice hockey and cross country skiing, thus obtained ridiculously small number of medals at the Olympics. Therefore it is important to continuously work towards increasing Russian athletes' presence in new Olympic sports. The success of Russian golfers in the international competitions, especially in the Olympics will affect positively the level of interest in golf among Russian population and attract more youngsters and their parents to connect their lives with golf.

The president of Russian Golf Association Konstantin Kozhevnikov predicts golf in Russia to become mass sport in the future, since golf is a very democratic sport and Russia is the country where numerous talents can be found. He also highlights that the novelty of golf in the country is a very significant factor for its development because modern Russia and its population is at the stage of enhanced interest in everything new. The president recognizes golf as a very efficient way to acquire new reliable business contacts and make business deals, thus highlighting business people's interest in this game among Russians as well. A restraining factor in the development of golf in Russia is the lack of constructed golf courses across the country, therefore the RGA launched a program targeted to build 500 golf courses during 15 years. The image of golf, created by mass media, as a purely aristocratic game made the majority of population consider the game unaffordable, but simultaneously acquired a number of golfers who enjoy playing golf as it is played by famous politicians, businessmen, doctors etc. Kozhevnikov, however, emphasizes that this stereotype should be ruined as the significant number of successful players comes from middle income families and stands for positioning golf in Russia as an affordable sport. (Luxury-info.ru 2005).

In Russia, travel companies use traditional marketing and advertising tools such as billboards, which are extremely popular in Russia; trade publications, free publications and leaflets. Radio and TV advertising is also extremely popular and is widely used by firms and guarantees at least a captive audience. All main tour operators and travel agents develop their web pages in order to promote

their products and make them available online. They give preferences to banner and linear advertisements which are much cheaper than printed media. Travel websites offer opportunities for posting opinions and views about traveling. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 73-74).

There is tremendously little coverage of golf on the Russian television even on sport channels. Printed media, such as newspapers and magazines give a better coverage of golf, however, is spread among a specific clientele. A Russian version of the world's most popular golf magazine "Golf Digest" was issued in Russia since 1998 and nowadays is distributed in Moscow country club, Moscow golf city club, Saint-Petersburg golf clubs, Golf Digest editorial office in Moscow and in Moscow hypermarket chains such as "Ramstor", "Sedmoi Kontinent" and in eponymous hypermarkets in Saint-Petersburg (Golfdigest.ru 2010). This magazine's topics are mostly about golf itself and ways of improving golf mastery rather than about golf tourism, however, the themes give coverage to the development of golf in Russia and its current situation (Golfdigest.ru 2010). Golf Digest is the main media partner of Russian Golf Association.

The Russian version of Golf Style magazine is the second popular golf magazine in Russia as it is the media partner of the major Russian golf forum "golf.ru". "Golf Style" is a magazine about the life of people who are keen on golf and things that make their lives more comfortable, convenient and beautiful. The mission of the magazine is to popularize golf not only to wealthy population but to the decorous part of the population as well and to unite people with similar interests. "Golf Style" claims that their target audience comprises of successful people who strive for more and follow an active social lifestyle, politicians, businessmen, business executives, creative elite and middle class energetic, ambitious representatives. "Golf Style Russia" is distributed in golf clubs, five-star hotels, airport business terminals, business class seats inside planes, boutiques, luxury restaurants, car salons, fitness clubs, sport clubs, yacht clubs, spa salons, golf and luxury related exhibitions and editorial offices. The magazine is also sent to a list of VIP receivers on a regular basis. (Golfstylerussia.ru 2010).

An annual magazine “International leisure world” in the Russian language is a popular magazine about elite tourism and regularly covers golf tourism topics with correspondent golf tourism destination offers. “International leisure world” in Russia is targeted to prosperous Russian population, in order to assist and affect their elite holiday choice, and to leading travel agents and tour operators, in order to provide them with the opportunity to cooperate with foreign partners. The magazine is distributed in elite city points (mainly Moscow and Saint-Petersburg) and at VIP halls at airports. It is delivered to elected travel companies and is dissipated during elite events. (Leisure.ru 2010).

There is a number of Internet portals dedicated to golf and that offer golf opportunities in Russia and abroad. Such examples are golftoday.ru and fotogolf.ru which discuss the golf game, relevant news and topics. Another visible portal aigolf.ru is marketing golf abroad in almost any country in the world. This portal is the member of International Association of Golf Tour Operators (Aigolf.ru 2010).

Concerning outbound golf tourism destinations, president Kozhevnikov mentions Spain, Switzerland and Great Britain as countries with great atmosphere for golf and perfect golf courses facilities. However, he highlights that suitable climate for golf is a question of individual preference and basically any country can be interesting for a Russian golf tourist. Russian travel agents and tour operators offer more and more golf packages and trips, which include golf in its curriculum. This trend proves that Russian society is approaching golf more vigorously. (Luxury-info.ru 2005).

As explained previously, the lack of internationally recognized golf courses in Russia is a binding factor in the creation and development of inbound golf tourism even though the number is continuously growing. Golf club “Le Méridien Moscow Country Club” is the world class golf course holding the number one golf championships in Russia “Cadillac Russian open”. The field is included in top 100 golf courses in the world (Golftoday.co.uk). This golf course is said to be the only one suitable, in all terms and by all standards, for international golf

events (Russian Golf Association). The second internationally acceptable golf course is “Golf and Yacht club Pestovo” holding “Russian Open” and in 2008 there were teams from 14 different countries participating, such as England, Israel, Italy, Norway, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovakia and others (Golfstyle.ru, 2008). Both previously mentioned courses are located in Moscow nearby surroundings. Unfortunately, these courses are the only ones so far that Russia can boast about. The participation of foreign teams in competitions on the territory of Russian Federation shows that inbound Russian golf tourist exists to some extent, but frequency and the number of incoming trips is quite abysmal, therefore inbound golf tourism cannot be called a progressive industry in the country.

4 ASCERTAINED PROFILES OF GOLF TOURISTS

Previously described typological divisions of golf tourists provide clear ideas about variable golf tourist profiles, the formulation of which depends on a number of factors, such as number of golf rounds played per annum, the role of golf in trip planning, the extent of personal interest and others. Specifications of Russian golf market reveal certain information useful in conceptualizing Russian golf profile by relating it to the existent classifications and modern Russian golf trends.

4.1 Profiles identified from combination of golf tourist typology models

The basic classification of sport tourism to active and passive participation is represented in Weed & Bull’s golf tourist typology model. Both golf participants and non-participants have certain interest in golf, but differentiate in actual involvement in sport. Further on the three main divisions are identified clearly and concurred in both Golf 20/20’s and Weed & Bull’s golf tourist classifications. They are avid, core and occasional golf tourists. The main determinant for the categories is an estimated involvement in golf, measured either with the number of golf rounds played annually in participant type case or in number of golf tournaments watched, for instance, in non-participant type. Non-participating

type is identified and taken into consideration since such fans are future golf tourists and therefore pertain to classification into three main categories as well as participating type. Three standard categories offered by Golf 20/20 fall into participation class since all of them imply some level of active involvement in golf during the trip. Participant golf tourists are in need of golf facilities, but the extent of necessity varies from the category to another. Avid category is named identically, whereas business and family golf tourist category represent core and occasional main categories correspondingly. One of the determinants of these types' division is the role of golf during the holidays. Thus golf is the most important activity for avid golfers, descending in significance level to core and occasional types. The extent of necessity for golf resources in occasional golf tourist's case is lower than for both core and avid ones, since occasional tourist perceives golf only as a possible activity during holidays and considers participation when golf course is suitable for variously skilled players. Another determinant of golfers' categories differentiation is the type of the golf course utilized and sought. In this case core golf players use golf courses joined with hotels and conference premises, when avid golfers choose high-class and famous courses opposite to the ones that occasional players pursue. An important characteristic of each category is what a golfer searches for at the destination. It is typical for all golf tourist types to be concerned with the range of other activities available, such as night life and restaurants, but occasional golfers are more interested in outdoor ones and activities suitable for families. Participant golf tourists can be either experienced ones, or learners. The difference is that a learner uses the trip in order to improve one's mastery in golf and therefore might be in need of supportive service such as golf training. An associate feature can be related to every main category due to existent golfers who value post golf activities such as golf club bar conversations much more than the actual game. This feature is typical for persons with high degree of interest in golf and eagerness to share and acquire golf-related information as well as communicate with golf concerned population about various topics. As golf is named to be a sport which assists in handling business deals, core golfers are very likely to have the associate feature in their profile. Novelty is an attractive feature for all golf categories. Reviewing the described theory, there are four major types of golf tourists with individualized characteristics – avid,

core, occasional and non-participant, which can be further stratified depending on experience level and presence of associate feature.

4.2 Modification of profiles based on Russian perspective

The number of golfers is initially quite small and the sport is very young in Russia. Therefore some of the sub-categories might not be present among Russian golfers. Due to the fact that golf is not covered remarkably in popular media in Russia, such as television, radio and newspapers, non-participating avid, core and occasional fans are in little presence. The pattern of golf spreading along media in Russia is described in chapter 7. As mentioned in chapter 3.2, golf has an image of elite sport in Russia and therefore attracts famous people in order to enrich their status and follow their rich friends. Moreover, golf is stated to be a supporter in acquiring new business contacts and making deals, therefore we can state that core golfers are likely to be tangibly present in Russian golf population, but elite status and wide connection with business matters incorporate associate feature to golf categories. Because golf itself and golf market is not that developed in Russia as in the rest of the world, but is a developing sector, occasional golf tourists is a growing category. Finally, as novelty is confirmed to be a significant factor for all golfers, the Russian case is enhancing this statement in importance since modern Russian society is striving for experiencing and getting to know new issues, such as golf inclusively.

5 SOUTHEAST ASIA AS AN ATTRACTIVE GOLF TOURISM DESTINATION

5.1 Indonesia

Golf in Indonesia is principally concentrated in few areas of the country, mainly around the capital city Jakarta. The fact of new developments of golf courses confirms that golf has been spreading rapidly across the country. Indonesia is the country of 17,000 islands and golf courses can be found on the biggest ones - Sumatra, Java and Borneo. The islands of Indonesia are stretching along the equator, therefore hot weather is guaranteed, except, with monsoon rain season from November up to the end of February. There are golf 9-hole and 18-hole golf courses that have been existing for over 20 years. Due to tourism industry development in the country, the number of golf courses is growing. Bali, for instance, has become an established golf tourism destination and Bali Golf and Country Club is holding international tournaments including Indonesian Open. More Indonesian islands become hosts for golf courses such as Bintan and Batam. The Equatorial climate and rainfall season are reasons for various and spectacular vegetation in Indonesia, therefore many golf courses in the country are located in stunning surroundings providing golfers with unforgettable golf rounds. Indonesian rich tropical beauty can boast about more than eighty fine golf courses. (Nelson 1995, 6-7).

There are a lot of golf courses in the country that are attractive to golfers not just because of their high quality and variety, but also due to magnificent landscape in which they are set. Golf courses are suitable for both amateurs and professionals and provide them with unforgettable experience. During the last several years, golf courses in Indonesia have been set up in unsurpassed locations such as picturesque lake shores, ocean cliffs, tropical forests, volcano craters and in valleys with a stupendous view of the neighboring mountains. The extent of golf courses' concentration around Jakarta is evaluated as around 43 golf courses within one hour driving distance. A lot of golf courses have been designed by international world class designers and are championship courses.

Nowadays golf courses in Indonesia are spread mostly in the areas of Bali, Batam, Java, Sumatra and West Java. (Asiarooms.com 2010).

The finest golf courses in Indonesia are claimed to be Bali Golf and Country Club, Finna Golf and Country Club, Jagorawi Golf and Country Club, Nirwana Bali Golf Club and Ria Bintan Golf Club (Ocean course). (Golfcourseofasia.com 2010).

5.2 Malaysia

Golf is a very popular sport for businessmen and the middle classes in Malaysia. The game gained benefaction of Malaysia political leaders. The country has a well established coaching framework for talented amateurs and for professional players. Golf itself has become very sophisticated, thus resulting in an increase in membership prices on high quality golf courses and quite often a requirement of the sufficient handicap from a golfer along with knowledge and strict abiding of golf attire and etiquette. The climate is similar to Indonesian therefore golf is played all year round with random exceptions during monsoon season lasting from November to February. The majority of golf courses is concentrated on Peninsular Malaysia located around the capital – Kuala Lumpur and around the most southern state of Johor in order to meet the demand of avid Singaporean golfers. Because evening cooler temperatures, the concept of night golfing has been introduced in several golf courses and proved to be successful. Golf in Malaysia is a terrific experience due to a number of reasons, such as good general standard of the course maintenance, the great variety of courses, staff hospitality and a chance of spotting unique Malaysian wildlife with monkeys and hornbills. (Nelson 1995, 36-38).

Malaysia is a great golf destination with more than 250 golf courses to select from. Tourists from all over the world come to play golf inside spectacular settings. Despite the fact that golf is considered to be a very sophisticated game in Malaysia, continuous opening of a constitutive number of golf courses made golf fees and equipment rent prices decrease. The fees are claimed to be very reasonable comparing to other Asian countries. Golfing can be afforded by

everyone and is a main recreational activity for tourists in Malaysia. Many courses have been designed by international specialists and hold international golf events. (Asiarooms.com 2010).

The finest golf courses in Malaysia are said to be Saujana Golf and Country Club and The Mines Resort and Golf Club. (Golfcourseofasia.com 2010).

5.3 The Philippines

The Philippines represent the least developed golf nation among other South East Asian nations. The fact that many golf courses in the islands are private and golf cannot be played by outsiders unless one has an accompanying club member, can be a problem for a foreign golf tourist. Golf can be quite expensive in the Philippines for foreign golf tourists since they are charged from two to five times more than locals, members or members' guests. The security on golf courses is so rigid that it might not be possible for outsiders even to drop by to a golf club bar in order to find club members to play golf with. Very common golf visitors are wealthy Japanese players. The best time for playing golf in the country is during dry cool season lasting from November to February. The best courses in the country are located in the south of the capital- Manila. (Nelson 1995, 73-74).

Golf in the Philippines is a unique experience in the enclaves. There are numerous venues that had been hosting prestigious international tournaments such The Asian PGA, The World Cup and the Philippine open. (Asiarooms.com 2010).

The finest golf courses in the Philippines are Manila SouthWood Golf and Country Club, Mount Malarayat Golf and Country Club and Sta. Elena Golf Club. (Golfcourseofasia.com 2010).

5.4 Thailand

The best time to visit Thailand and therefore to play golf is during winter between November and January. Green fees have been growing in Thailand, however they are still relatively reasonable comparing to the rest of the world. (Nelson 1995, 109-110).

Thailand can boast about some of the best golf courses in the world. Playing golf in the country is extremely enjoyable with its flourishing green courses with expansive area available for the sport in a relaxing atmosphere. Golf courses in Thailand offer good opportunities and special packages for golf beginners in order to make such first experience an unforgettable one. Thai golf courses provide very tailored golf products for all levels skilled golf players basing on their expertise and even individual temperament. (Asiarooms.com 2010).

Alpine Golf Club, Blue Canyon Country Club, Laem Chabang International Country Club, Navatanee Golf Course and Thai Country Club are considered to be the finest one in Thailand. (Golfcourseofasia.com 2010).

5.5 Singapore

Singapore golf venues reflect their population's affluence, aspirations and expectations. The country has a very great number of golf courses taking into account a small square of the state, and the number of golf players is extremely high taking into consideration the whole Singaporean population. The number of golf players is so big that night golf sessions available no longer improve the situation so that Singapore golfers cannot get a golf club membership and thus are in need of traveling with golf purposes. Several courses hosted top world international golf events. The fields are not always easy for outsiders to get into and weekends, normally very busy, are reserved for clubs' members. A very hot and humid climate obligates visitors to take sun precautions. The monsoon season in Singapore is similar to Indonesian and Malaysian ones, however, it is very rare that golf courses are closed during this period. Singapore is a business centre with numerous skyscrapers and shopping malls, however, the

lush exotic vegetation around golf courses can be appreciated. (Nelson 1995, 100-101).

The finest golf courses in Singapore are Laguna National Golf and Country Club, Sentosa Golf Club and Tanah Merah Country Club (Garden course). (Golfcourseofasia.com 2010).

6 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR – AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT TO UNDERSTAND

Nowadays the tourism and hospitality market has become highly concentrated and therefore competitive. Moreover, the globalization process increases the rate of competition since tourism enterprises which have headquarters in the USA, Germany, Hong Kong and other countries entered severe contest with competitors for conquering emerging markets such as Japan and Singapore. In order to succeed in this contest, companies contribute constitutive amount of money to marketing research directed for the understanding what their consumer wants to buy, where, how and why, what identifying means and attempting to predict consumer behaviour patterns. The company that realizes the extent of consumer's reaction to new products, marketing pushes and prices has a great benefit against its competitors. (Котлер et al. 2005, 269-270).

The understanding of consumer behaviour is the platform for company's marketing activities such as designing, selling and promoting current and new tourism products. It is vitally important to understand the decision making process of the consumer in choosing and using tourism product and factors that influence their decision. Thus a company will approach the targeted results and finds out methods to affect consumer's choice and persuade to buy a product. There were numerous consumer models designed, but the lack of empirical testing, especially in tourism industry, is an existing problem. Consumer behaviour in tourism is a complicated issue to study due to the deep emotional importance of purchase. The decision of the consumer is influenced by a

number of internal and external factors and it is complicated to define the level and ways of its affection. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 3-4).

6.1 Factors affecting consumer behaviour

There are numerous cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics that affect consumer behaviour. The majority of these factors cannot be controlled or influenced by marketing specialists, however, should be taken into consideration. (Котлер et al. 2005, 271).

Consumer behaviour models have been designed in order to attempt to illustrate simply the relationship between factors affecting consumer behaviour. Special tourism consumer behaviour models have been designed, since the intangibility of service has a significant effect in complexity on a consumer's decision making process and makes it more high-risk. Tourism products have unique characteristics, therefore consumer behaviour of travelers may be significantly different from basic consumer behaviour. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 40-45).

A number of vital dimensions generate differences between consumer behaviour and tourist behaviour. One of the major differences is in the extended phases surrounding tourist activities. There were five such phases identified by Clawson and Knetsch (1966): an anticipation or pre-purchase stage, a travel to the site segment, an on-site experience, a return travel component and an extended recall and recollection phase. Consumer behaviour is mainly concerned with product choice and product satisfaction. The differences from standard consumer behaviour can be noted in each phase of tourist behaviour. In pre-purchase phase, many tourists plan and dream about an upcoming trip for a long period of time- months or even years before. This behaviour pattern is not applicable for consumer's choice of buying everyday products such as groceries or shampoo and thus creates a difference. In on-site experience phase tourists view, feel, hear, absorb and sense the visited place thus forming an intangible experience. Sincerely personal reactions and socio-environmental outcomes of tourists are different. This is relevant to a return travel component

phase as well. The recollection phase of tourist experience is often a very long lasting: tourists think and remember their experience for months or even years after their trip. Thus a tourism product experience does not fall into decay and can be enhanced by repeated visits and enduring information about the place. As mentioned previously, consumer behaviour is concerned with product satisfaction, but very often there is a lack of enthusiasm to reveal product's long lasting contribution to consumers' life. Tourism is a people to people business in consumption and production and therefore tourist behaviour is different from consumer behaviour by sociality extent. Expectations of tourists for versatile holidays are much less clear than the ones for purchasing a car, for example. Different expectations of tourists and their roles in satisfaction should be distinguished and correctly treated when creating tourist behaviour models. (Pearce 2005, 9-11).

Gilbert (1991) designed a consumer decision making model in tourism, presented in figure 5.1.1, which illustrated two different levels of factors influencing the consumer.

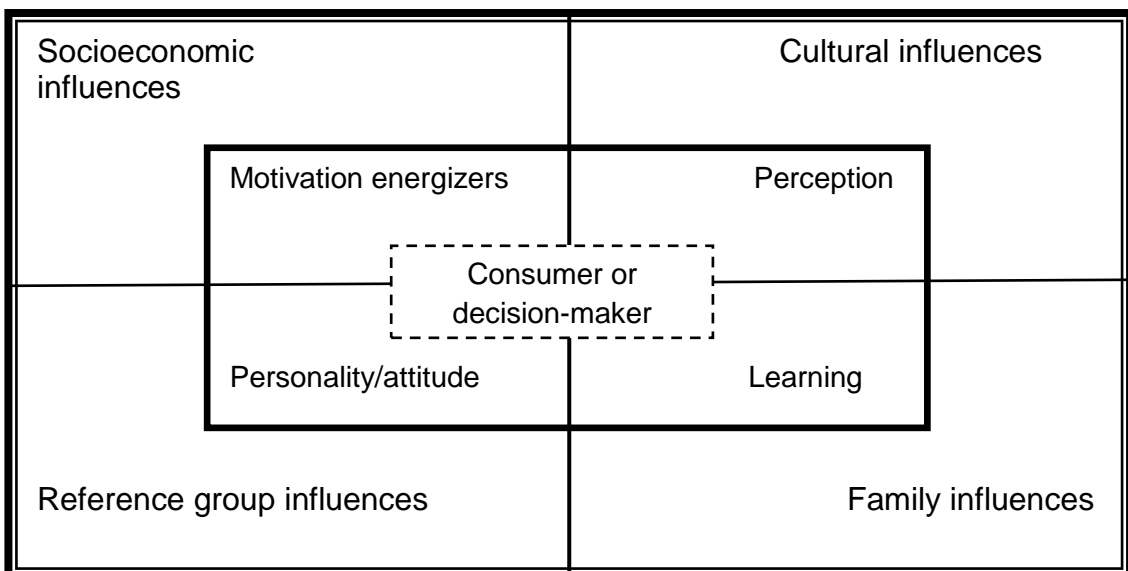


Figure 5.1.1 Consumer decision-making framework (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47).

The closer level to the decision maker includes psychological influences such as perception, learning, motivation energizers and attitude. The second level of influences includes ones that appeared during socialization progression such as socioeconomic, cultural, reference group and family influences. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 47).

6.1.1 Influential factors generated from socialization progression

Cultural factors are one of major consumer behaviour influences. Culture is the main power which determines wishes and human behaviour. The concept includes major values, desires, behaviour peculiarities that a human acquires from society, which is a dynamic substance that changes adapting to alterations happening in the environment. Therefore the bases of human culture tend to change. Culture is a highly important concept for tourism and hospitality industry since it determines where and how people travel, where they stay and what they eat. In order to design new products and new services, marketing executives constantly attempt to follow the dynamics of culture. For instance, a typical feature of a modern culture - increased interest towards healthy lifestyle, pushed hotels to extend with sport yards and fitness complexes and caused significant changes in restaurants' menus. Consumers from different countries vary heavily in consumer behaviour patterns since they follow different cultures. Companies operating at the international level have to adapt their products and services to cultural issues of their consumer. (Котлер et al. 2005, 271-274).

Social belonging is included in socioeconomic influences in consumer behaviour. Any society has a social class structure where social classes are relatively stable and ordered divisions members of which have similar interests, values and behavioural norms. There are seven basic social class divisions identified in American society, which are higher layer of high class (less than 1 per cent, elite society which is a main target for selling luxurious trips), lower layer of high class (2 per cent, receive income from professional activity and business, tend to spend large sums of money on expensive purchases in order to impress and distinguish themselves from lower classes, strive for being

accepted in the elite society), higher layer of middle class (12 per cent, are keen on career development, generating new ideas, receive themselves and provide children with good education in order to avoid falling down into a lower class, a main target for selling good houses and items for everyday life), middle class (32 per cent, receive middle income, working population, believe in contributing large sums of money to children's education), working class (38 per cent, receive average income, follow workers' lifestyle, are in need of and apply widely advice on purchasing decisions), higher layer of lower class (9 per cent, do unqualified work for little salary, do not live on social benefits, but on received income, level of life barely overpasses poverty) and lower layer of lower class (7 per cent, live on social benefits, mostly unemployed, do not strive for getting employed, preferring to receive money from government or higher social classes). Tourism and hospitality enterprises must apply marketing towards targeted social classes. (Котлер et al. 2005, 274-276).

Russian modern society stratification has been illustrated in the model designed by Natalia Rimashevskaya, the doctor of economic science, in 1996. According to her theory Russian society is divided into Russian wide elite groups, which possess capital equal to equally comparable western capitals and is of highly powerful influence at Russian wide level, regional and corporate elites groups, which possess constitutive capital in Russian scale and is of highly powerful influence at regional level, higher layer of middle class, which possess capital and income serving standard western consumption needs, dynamic middle class, which possess income serving average Russian and slightly higher consumer needs and are characterized by social activism and orientation to legal means of getting income, outsiders, who possess low income and are characterized by low social activism, fringes, who are characterized by antisocial orientations and low social activism and, finally, criminalists, who are highly socially adaptable but act illegally avoiding norms and regulations. (Zhurnal.lib.ru).

It is estimated that Russian elite groups represent less than 0.5 per cent of the whole modern Russian society, regional and corporate elite groups comprise 6.5 per cent, higher layer of middle class and dynamic middle class 21 per cent

when other classes represent the rest 72 per cent. (Волков & Добреньков 2001).

Role is a sociological concept that identifies the person's position in society (Pearce 2005, 21). A person's role represents actions that are expected from one by other members of the society the one belongs to. People naturally belong to several social groups and therefore have different roles, such as a role of a parent, a child, a boss or an employee. That is why a role that a person has affects heavily on consumer behaviour patterns. Circumstances affect roles of people and very often explain tourist behaviour. For instance, a person would have different behaviour and service expectations when dining at high class restaurant than having dinner in a fast food court. Every role has a direction to a person's status, which reflects the extents of respect of other social group members. Very often consumer behaviour is predetermined by status patterns. In this case consumers are mostly concerned with people's opinion and perception of one's action, but not with high quality service or product. Roles and status are dynamic concepts and marketing executives often make mistakes in identifying those of their potential customers. (Котлер et al. 2005, 278-279).

The behaviour of tourists was attempted to be explained and described using role-related stereotypes. Cohen (1974) illustrated the collection of tourist roles at the destination which included the explorer, the drifter, the individual mass tourist and the organized mass tourist. Later on there were several behavioural characteristics added to tourist stereotypes and the clearest role-related behaviours of tourists were identified: a tourist who stays briefly in one place, experiments with local food, goes to famous places, takes photos and explores places privately. (Pearce 2005, 21-22).

Groups to which a consumer belongs, influence heavily one's social standards and behaviour. Such groups consist of people with whom a consumer interacts regularly – family, friends, neighbors and other people. There are other groups existent in consumers' life where interaction is more formal and less regular comparing to previously described groups, but which have impact on behaviour

patterns significantly. Examples of such groups are church clubs, professional organization, professional unions etc. Reference groups are groups that affect consumer behaviour and to which a consumer refers his actions. People are likely to be influenced by so called gauge groups that they do not belong to, but dream about such belonging. Therefore they may behave according to specific features which are relevant to the reference group. It is important for a marketing executive to know which reference groups influence one particular customer's behaviour. Such groups have a heavy impact on consumers, since they reveal new lifestyle patterns and behaviour stereotypes, and affect life standards and consumer's self esteem. However, the more personalized the product is, the less impact behaviour reference groups have on consumer. (Котлер et al. 2005, 278-279).

Family members can significantly influence purchasing decisions of an individual and family is widely perceived as an integrated customer target in many businesses including tourism (Котлер et al. 2005, 278). There is a subject of who plays which role in choosing travel destination (Pearce 2005, 129).

6.1.2 Psychological influences

Factors affecting consumer behaviour that are at closer level to a consumer comprise of motivation energizers, perception, attitude and learning. Such factors are also called primary psychological influences (Котлер et al. 2005, 291).

Motivation energizers or motivators that affect tourists can be divided into two categories: motivators to take a holiday and motivators to take a particular holiday at a specific destination at a particular time. There are several classifications of motivators in tourism such as cultural, physical, emotional, status, personal and personal development motivators. Cultural motivators include sightseeing and experiencing new cultures, physical motivators include activities such as sun tanning and exercising. Emotional motivators examples are adventure, romance and spiritual fulfillment. Status motivators imply striving for exclusivity, fashionability and obtaining good deal. Personal motivators

comprise of making new friends and visiting friends or relatives, and personal development motivators embrace increasing knowledge and learning new skills. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 53-54).

Because every tourist is different from another, motivators also vary. Factors that determine tourists' motivators are their personality, lifestyle, past experience as a tourist, past life, perceptions of their own skills and how they want to be seen and perceived by other people. Motivators are dynamic and change according to transformations in tourist's lives such as getting a child, changes in disposable income level, worsening of health or modified expectations and experiences as a tourist. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 55).

The combination of several motivators affects consumer's behaviour simultaneously. Usually the choice of a holiday at least partly satisfies all tourist's motivators, or one motivator becomes prevailing. Tourist do not always express motivators fully truly due to a number of reasons such as uncertainty about motivators being accepted and understood by others, false recognition of conscious and sub conscious motivators, determining two motivators as overlapping and unmatchable and realizing difference between stated motivators and actual behaviour. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 56-57).

Motivators vary among demographic groups and depend on gender, national and cultural differences, types of tourism product and the timing of purchase decisions. (Swarobrooke & Horner 2007, 58-60).

Perception is a process by which a consumer collects, organizes and interprets the information creating one's own conscious "picture of the world" or of a situation. A motivated consumer is prepared to act, but actions depend on person's perception of the situation. This implies that two identically motivated people are going to behave differently in a purchase situation, depending on their personal perception of a given situation. (Котлер et al. 2005, 293).

Learning is a psychological concept that describes changes in one's behaviour affected by previous experience. The majority of consumer behaviour patterns

is developed and obtained throughout the whole duration of life. When a consumer gets acquainted with a product or service he learns to utilize it and discovers something new for himself. For example, it is wise for hotels to assist their guests in getting to know better the quality of their service. In high class hotels there are special excursions organized for the new comers in which hotel personnel introduce to the guests the hotel accommodation conditions and its distinctive features. Returning guests are told about changes occurred in the hotel since their last stay. Such actions are implemented not only through communicating with hotel staff, but with sending special letters and leaflets to hotel's guests. (Котлер et al. 2005, 295).

Consumer forms one's attitude during activities and by learning which affect consumer behaviour. Attitude can be described as a person's unquestionable opinion and feelings that one has about a certain subject. Attitudes are formed based on personal experience, other people's opinions or other factors. It is essential for marketing specialists to know which attitudes their customers have since false or negative attitudes severely affect the image of the firm among consumers and consequently financial success of the company. In order to fix negative attitudes, the company usually launches marketing campaign targeted to change consumer's attitude. It is very hard to modify attitudes since they are interrelated in human consciousness. Therefore it is much easier for the company to launch a new product which does not acquire negative attitudes of the customers, rather than attempt to change such attitudes. Attitudes formed in consumer's childhood are the strongest ones and hardest to be affected. That is why companies nowadays pay huge attention to children as lifelong consumers by creating special programs for them or specific menus, for instance. Previously formed negative attitudes are extremely difficult to change. (Котлер et al. 2005, 296-299).

6.2 Factors affecting consumer's holiday decision

The purchase decision making model illustrated previously reflected two levels of factors affecting the actual consumer's decision. The purchase decision is a result of multiple complex processes affected by myriad factors. Figure 6 below

demonstrates a wide range of such factors which have clear relevance to motivators and represent a number of external influencers. The scope of this figure confirms the complex range of purchasing decision process. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 74-75).

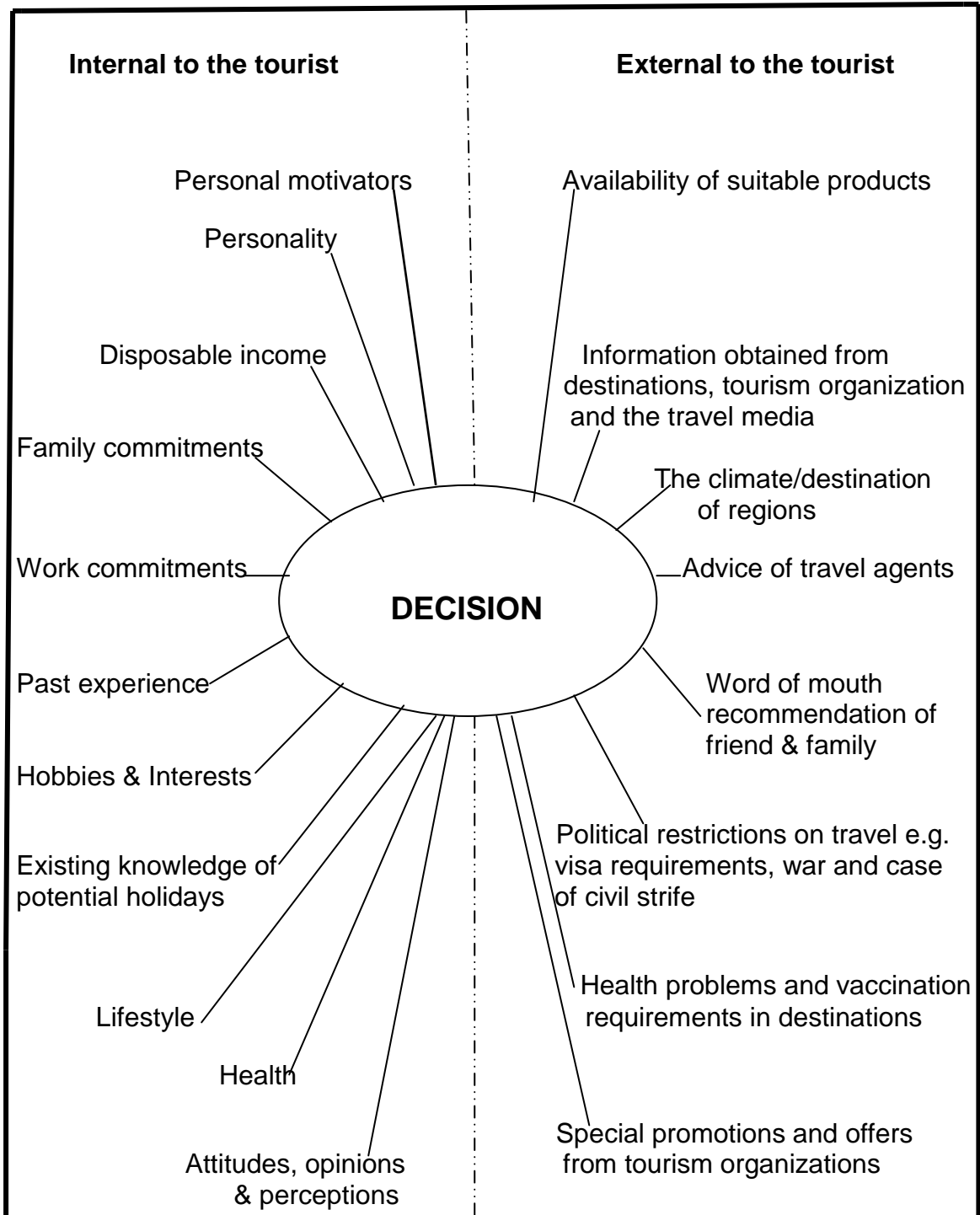


Figure 6 Factors influencing the holiday decision (Swarbrooke and Horner 2007, 75)

Factors that are on the left side of the model are internal to the tourist and include personal motivators or motivation energizers, disposable income, family and work commitments, hobbies and interests, lifestyle, health conditions, personality, attitudes, opinions and perceptions and existing knowledge of potential holidays. These factors and their affection patterns have been described in the previous sub chapter. Factors external to the tourist that influence their consumer behaviour are listed on the right side of the model. The majority of these influences can be changed or affected by companies such as availability of suitable products, information received from travel media and tourism organization, advice on travel agencies and special promotions and offers. However, such external factors as word of mouth recommendations, political restrictions, visa or vaccination requirements or the climate of the destination cannot be predicted or affected by tourism firms.

Choosing a destination or a holiday is only an initial decision that tourists make. Further on they have to decide on numerous activities to be done at the destination and plan every day of the trip and each such decision is an outcome of a multifaceted decision-making process. Purchase decisions are a result of three behavioural concepts: motivation, cognition and learning (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 74-76).

Overall, as mentioned previously, there are numerous certain factors affecting consumer's decision. Customer's choice appears to be a result of a complicated process of inter-influence of cultural, social, personal, psychological and other multiple factors. Not all of them can be affected by marketing specialists, but acknowledgment of all factors provides better understanding of a targeted consumer. (Котлер et al. 2005, 299).

6.3 Typical characteristics of a Russian consumer

The outbound traveling of Russians has been increasing rapidly generally around 10-15 percent during the years 2002-2007. Russian traveler's undertaking holidays abroad average age is 39 (excluding children under 16) where the average men's and women's age is 38 and 49 correspondingly. Top

outbound destinations in 2006 for Russian travelers were Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, China, Finland, Turkey, Estonia, Egypt, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Azerbaijan, Italy and Spain. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 32-37).

Beach holidays are the most popular among Russians and comprise 31 per cent of all tourism purposed trips. Russians mostly choose summer time for traveling. The New Year period is also a popular period for holidays and often Russians choose hot climate destinations such as Egypt, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Thailand. There is a trend to prefer more expensive tours such as adventure traveling and exotic destinations visiting. The immense majority prefer packaged trips, however, since there are more options appearing for wealthy population and disposable income level grows, individual tourism is becoming more popular. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 38-39).

Russian consumers electronic use travel research and traditional methods. Many consumers rely on traditional information sources such as television and travel agency which offer plenty of printed promotional material. Those consumers who have access to the Internet use the whole variety of web-based information offered. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 70).

There was an increase in the web search method indicated. There are distinctions between men's and women's travel research and buying behaviour: women tend to undertake more research and make purchase in advance, when men often follow an immediate impulse. The profile of the online purchaser is represented by a 25-35 aged young professional with high income. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 70).

There is a small brand awareness of international travel brands, partly because the level of international travel brands penetration is relatively low. Therefore Russian consumer in search of international destination would rather consider resorts and areas than a certain company. (Eye for Travel Research 2008, 70).

7 METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The subject of Russian golf profile has not been investigated previously, therefore the research that was undertaken, can be considered a pioneer work. An obvious decision was made concerning choosing qualitative research method as the major research method for the thesis, due to the facts discovered after studying related theory and facts about current situation of golf in Russia. The number of golf players in Russia seems not to be sufficient in order to conduct a reliable quantitative research. As mentioned previously, Russian golf profile is a developing phenomenon therefore it is in need of deeper understanding, which is possible to obtain through qualitative research technique. The topic of the thesis does not imply creation of any kind of statistical data.

The aim of the qualitative research is to achieve a deeper understanding of human behaviour and the reasons directing this behaviour. This research method studies the principals and patterns of decision making, therefore, compared to quantitative research method, a smaller, but more focused sample is needed. Qualitative method reveals results only relative to particular cases explored and other general conclusions are just hypotheses which are in need of testing. There are several qualitative research approaches used in social sciences such as ethnographic research, critical social research, ethnical inquiry, foundational research, historical research, grounded theory, phenomenological and philosophical research. Phenomenological research is exploring a particular phenomenon. Philosophical research is a logical analysis made to clarify definitions and make fair judgments concerning a specific issue. A general tool for analyzing data received from qualitative research is the observer's impression which is formed and consequently reported based on examined data and its further interpretation. The impression is reported in a structured or quantitative form. (Wikipedia.org 2010).

In order to obtain qualitative information needed for understanding the subject, interviews with a target segment were undertaken. The target segment included

not only professional Russian golfers, but also people who are interested in golf to some extent and played the sport with undefined frequency. The justification of such a choice is the fact that Russian golfing is a growing sector and therefore the ideas and perceptions of all – avid, core and occasional players are important to take into account in order to get the clearest idea about existing Russian golf profile and its development patterns. Previously prepared framework for the interview with golfers contained open questions targeted to identify the role of golf for the respondent, his travel preferences, attitude towards playing golf abroad, justifications of choosing destination for golf tourism, and attempted to understand the extent of golf importance during vacation. Qualitative approach leaves freedom for unplanned discussions to be made, therefore, depending on a particular case, there were attempts embarked in order to ascertain one's attitude towards South East Asia region and golfing inside the area and other related issues. The objective of the research was to build an integral image and understand the Russian golf profile concept, and, based on it, consider and evaluate the South East Asian perspective.

The method of data analysis applied was qualitative content analysis which is defined by Arlene Fink (2003, 68) as a method of interpreting and analyzing qualitative research data. Silverman (2004, 182) specifies that qualitative content analysis produces comprehensive overview of the data set as a whole. Justifications of choosing the respected data analysis are based on the studied phenomenon, as described previously. However, qualitative content analysis possesses a number of advantages that assisted in making the research valuable.

First of all, content analysis is the cheapest method and thus suitable for a graduate student. It is also quite easy to correct mistakes in such data analysis. The major benefit of qualitative content analysis is that the results are unobtrusive, since the topic is not affected by the analyst because books have been written and speeches have been pronounced. Therefore the level of subject affection is relatively low. Disadvantages of such data analysis method concern reliability and validity, since conversations and communication data is

often received. Therefore, there should be a special way of recording such data in order to proceed with valuable analysis. (Rubin & Babbie 2009, 245-246).

An initial step in conducting qualitative content analysis is to choose whether the analysis focuses on latent or manifest content, where manifest content implies obvious and visible features and latent content implies underlying meaning (Graneheim & Lundman 2003, 2). The research is going to focus on manifest content and information received from interviews with latent tint in specific cases. The deep understanding of the phenomenon requires looking at the underlying implications along with analysis of evident information. One of the major decisions in using content analysis is identifying unit of analysis which implies objects of study such as community, an organization and others (Graneheim & Lundman 2003, 3). The units of analysis in the research are whole interviews of the targeted segment – Russian golfers.

Consumer behaviour models, specified in decision making process and factors affecting holiday decision, presented in the previous chapter, are the basic theoretical concepts and were used as a tool for analyzing received data. This analysis implies demonstration of general factors and revelation of related to the particular case ones in order to follow and comprehend target segment's behaviour patterns and its affecters.

Due to the fact that Moscow area and big cities' such as Saint-Petersburg areas are the most developed ones golfwise, therefore the study is delimited with golfers coming from such regions. Hence it appears to be an obstacle in forming the integral Russian profile. Secondly, not all golfers constantly use the Internet and are willing to take part in an online interview, therefore, received data can be the result of random replies and respondents. Finally, the lack of serious attitude towards the undertaken interview for a student's final thesis could have affected the responses' veracity.

Internet golf forums represent a valuable source of information for the concerned qualitative research. Wide topic coverage along with multiple opinions and discussions is a great assistance in attempts to find out answers

for questions of interest and enhance the understanding of the subject. Hence, forums were broadly used during all the stages of the research.

8 RESULTS

8.1 Aims of preliminary questions and evaluation of answers

Practical findings for the research were formulated from opinions and perceptions of Russian golf players obtained from actual interviews, which proceeded according to a preliminarily constructed structure, and from forums, designed to share information between each other and for golf players' communication. The amount of information available in forums was quite extensive, therefore it was very important to concentrate on the topic scripts mostly related and utilize it in order to receive more answers and more description for the questions created to achieve the understanding of the phenomenon. Even though the list of questions prepared for the interviews is quite structured (APPENDIX 1), not all questions have been answered in the desired way or even have not been answered at all, therefore the scenario of conversations with golf players often changed and covered several other related topics, thus presenting ideas for issues affecting the analysis of the phenomenon. Qualitative approach of the research permits modifications in interview procedure and questions structure, since interview questions are only skeletons for obtaining answers for the research questions.

The first question in the interview was about the duration of playing golf of the respondent. This characteristic is important to know since opinions about phenomenon vary between amateur players and professionals significantly. Results of the research proved this assumption. In addition, the length of the hobby of a respondent assisted in identifying the golf tourist type in every specific case, whether it was avid, core or occasional. As described previously, golf tourist profiles were created based on golf rounds played per year and the

length of involvement in golf. Finally, information about the length of hobby is relative to the current situation of golf in Russia which is one of the research questions. This question was answered by all reached respondents and was possible to be recognized from forum posts as well.

The second question was aimed to discover reasons for playing golf. This question directly addresses the research question about the importance of golf among players. Moreover it helps to understand what the necessary features are that golfers seek in destinations and their facilities in order to do the sport and enjoy the hobby fully. Finally, information obtained from answers to the question revealed motivators of golfers to play the sport and factors affecting such. The issues appeared to be of high interest among golfers and interested parties since special topics named “Why do you play golf?” were often noticed in the golf forums. Actual respondents were not noticed to have difficulties in answering this question or avoid it, therefore opinions of all respondents were received.

The next question aimed to discover where and how often golfers play. Answers to this question helped to clearly set the type of golfer, based on golf tourist typology theory described in chapter 4 and estimate the perspective of golf tourism based on places where golfers play. Consequently, this information assisted in picking up golf tourism destinations which are popular among Russian golfers and discovering justifications for such interest. This topic appeared to be one of the most popular ones on golf forums and interviewees were eager to share information related to this question.

The following question has a direct relation to the research question about the importance of golf among players and its place in life it aimed to make respondents reproduce their own ideas about significance of golf for them in life. The nature of the question leaves much freedom for a respondent in replying, however, also caused some difficulties in producing the information. Thus the volume and relativism of information varied from case to case. Internet forums did not represent a valuable source of information since this topic is not widely

covered and could be ascertained only from underlying content of texts and discussions.

The question about preferred company when playing golf was designed in order to understand consumer behaviour patterns concerning family and friends influence. In addition, this dimension helped to more clearly identify Russian golfer profile as well as tourist profile. All respondents were able to give an answer to the question, however, Internet forums demonstrated little coverage of the issue.

The next set of questions are about traveling and traveling with golf purposes. The issues addressed in this section include respondents' frequency of traveling, destinations and reason for traveling and picking destinations, the image of a perfect vacation including the place and the preferred company to travel with, if the respondent travels to play golf or not – where and justifications of the choice. The question offers a golf player to describe the best trip from the previous experience along with reasons of naming the described travel the best one. Such questions were asked in order to figure out travel consumer behaviour patterns of Russian golfers and to recognize factors that affect behaviour most significantly. Afterwards the received information was also utilized in order to identify Russian travel profile, explore destination choices and see whether South East Asia region is involved. Finally, questions helped to identify golf tourism patterns and relative descriptive features such as frequency and destinations. The number of positive replies concerning regular trips with golf purposes lead to form the understanding of Russian golf profile with the perspective of golf tourism. Freedom of answering such questions lead to long informative replies in some cases, and people seemed to be eager to “boast” about the places they visited and destinations they reached. Although in some cases it was difficult for respondents to formulate an answer and they were able to give only short answers. Despite such circumstances, Internet forums offered a wide range of information related to the topics of traveling.

Another question included in the described section was about the amount of disposable income that is possible to be invested in traveling. This question

initially was designed to evaluate the perspective of traveling to South East Asia region, since it is quite expensive. However, due to Russian culture specifics concerning unwillingness to talk about money issues, respondents drudgingly avoided answering the question, therefore, the information was impossible to obtain. Internet forums did not cover the money question either. This section of questions appears to be the key one since it covers several issues necessary to find out answers to all research questions simultaneously. As confirmed previously, information received from respondents' replies assist in configuring relative issues concerning the current situation of golf. However, the more significantly, it addresses the importance of golf among players and it can be a motive to travel, and it presents attractive factors of golf destinations from Russian players' point of view.

The last question designed beforehand was discovering preference concerning destination at which to play golf during high season, which means summer months for Russian golfers. The issue addresses the research question concerning attractive factors of golf destinations, opinions and perceptions about potential ones and reasons for selection. The second part of this question offered a respondent to choose between Spain and Singapore as a preferred golf destination during high season. These countries have been offered for selection since Spain is one of the most popular golf tourism destinations and Singapore is the country in South East Asia region with multitude golf facilities. Such comparison and justification for selection was needed to create the perspective of golf tourism in South East Asia.

Despite the preliminarily constructed framework for the research, the list of questions appeared to be only a scenario that further had been exposed to a number of digressions and changes, since the topic includes a large number of issues that are useful in understanding the phenomenon. The result of the empirical research proved relevance of the theory of golf tourist typology in choosing golf destination along with basic consumer behaviour patterns' influence.

8.2 Reached golf tourist types and their perceptions

Random golfers who were interviewed had different track records of playing golf varying from two years to twenty. This is an extremely lucky situation, since as we discovered, golf in Russia is only 21 years old. Certainly, the ideas and perceptions of the Russian golfer who has played for the whole duration of Russian golf's life represents an issue of the increased interest.

This person represents a golfer who had gone through all the changes and development of golf in Russia and therefore can be considered a fully formed Russian golfer profile. His reason for playing the sport is quite simple – “I love this game” he replied which proves high level of interest in golf. It is obvious that golfer falls into avid participant category and was proved after the statement that he tried to play about one golf round per week. Golf is a primary activity for avid golf tourists during the trip. So it is for the respondent – he mentioned he always plays golf during the trips, whether they are business ones or vocational. The company to play with is not a significant factor in this sense, since the respondent normally plays alone. The fact that the respondent is an avid golfer, also confirms the statement that he dedicates all his free time to the game of golf. An interviewee maintains his hobby in Russia, Ukraine, France, Switzerland and Turkey on a regular basis thus these countries are golf tourism destinations in the this case. The best golf trips were named to be the ones to Turkey due to inimitable correlation between price and quality. Another important reason was named to be the absence of problems with visa receiving. Concerning choice between Spain and Singapore as a potential golf tourism destination, Singapore was named as a preferred one purely because of the novelty of the place. The respondent had already played in Spain and did not mention that the experience was great. The respected golfer did not prefer to answer extensively the questions about traveling in general and just mentioned that he is an avid traveler since he is employed in tourism and hospitality industry.

It was possible to find and identify all types of golf tourists during the research – avid, core and occasional. Certainly, avid category represented the minority

which can logically be explained by the natural novelty of golf for Russians and a popularity only growing. Core golfers were ascertained basing on the number of golf rounds played per year. The majority of the respondents and online discussions' participants, even those who have started golf not more than two years ago, fall into core golf tourist category than undeniably prefer golf courses allied to hotel and rarely to conference centers. Indeed, it was mentioned in golf tourist typology by Weed and Bull (2004) that the majority of world golf tourists fall into this category. The only differentiation is connected with playing golf during business trips. Certainly, Russian golfers use the game to assist business deals procedures, as the rest of the world does, however, none of the golfers mentioned that they prefer and regularly play golf during business trips. Of course, business is the primary activity in such types of the trips and golf does not make a claim to be the core target on the trip. However, Russian golfers appeared to play golf mostly during holidays and on different kinds of vacations. Occasional golf tourists were found within interviewees and forums' participants and mostly were sharing opinions about traveling in general, not about golf tourism. Such opinions were interesting and needed to be taken into consideration since they characterize family golf tourists and explain their consumer behaviour. The majority of occasional golfers that were examined here played golf for two or maximum five years and it was obvious that they did not base their travel decisions primarily on golf facilities. They considered golf rather a possible free time activity during the vacation, than a principal motivator.

Characteristics of golf facilities and destination features that golfers seek for varied among avid, core and occasional representatives. Both similarities and differences with the Weed and Bull's (2004) golf tourists' typology theory were noticed. The quality of golf courses was named as the most important characteristic by avid golfers among respondents. The description of avid golf tourist confirms that high quality and notorious golf courses are sought for and preferred by them. Another feature typical for Russian avid golfer that was mentioned, is an excellent combination of price and quality of the golf course, where the price index was not mentioned as a priority trait though. The quality of services including friendliness and hospitality of personnel was also

highlighted as an important expectation and were related to the integral perception of the high quality golf course. The respondents that were identified as avid golf tourists explained that golf is a passion for them, in some cases a lifestyle, therefore it plays a significant role in their lives, and since people by their nature do everything possible in order to improve the quality of their living, striving for best golf facilities and high-class service is an obvious desire.

Core Russian golf tourists mostly were highlighting the possibility of activities typical for a vacation such as resting on the beach, sightseeing, exploring cultural artifacts and diving to be combined with golf playing. This definitely confirms the theoretical description of the concept of core golf players that usually choose golf courses allied to the hotels. The number and quality of the supporting elements at the golf resort appeared to play a very significant role as well, since respondents highlighted the importance of diverse free time spending and the possibility to find interesting activity for each family member or a travel companion. Russian core golfers also highlighted that a picturesque golf course would significantly affect their golf destination choice. A common characteristic, mentioned by the vast majority of the explored segment as a very important one, is the requirement of visa to the potential golf tourism destination. This feature had not been allied to any of golf tourists profiles identified by typology theories, therefore can be considered a distinctive Russian golfers' feature.

Previously it was stated that occasional golf tourists mostly were describing their expectations concerning vacations and regular trips with little or sometimes absent description of the characteristics that they seek for in golf destinations. It is an interesting finding that very popular important factors turned out to be the language that it is spoken and understood in the destination country and the distance from Russia. Indeed, Russians are not well skilled in foreign languages, therefore they are likely to feel discomfort at a number of destinations, therefore it is wise to assume that English speaking countries and countries where Russian is understood and can be used by locals in service purposes, are most attractive for Russian occasional golfers. A remarkable discovery is that none of the avid golfers mentioned language as a barrier for traveling to golf destination. Indeed, the international language of golf and

therefore of all golf players is English, hence an avid golfer is most likely to be skilled in the English language and thus feel comfortable at almost any destination. Long distance from home country was mentioned as a negative factor due to the high price traveling costs and the convenience of trips with bad connections. Occasional and core golfers are not willing to spend much time of their vacation just for getting to the destination.

8.3 Differences and similarities with theoretical statements of respondents reached

It is now clear that common features of various golf tourist types were found also in Russian golfers cases. However, differentiations and special features that extended typology models, proved the uniqueness of Russian golf tourist case and brought up interesting findings and characteristics.

Internet golf forums contained numerous topics about countries to play golf in, their specifics, positive and negative points and justifications of the choice. According to the latest statistics, the most popular destinations for Russian travelers are Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia and Spain. Indeed, the discussions and shared experiences concerning playing golf in the countries occupied a large space among all other discussions. Neighboring countries such as Finland and Ukraine were also among the most popular in golfers' debates. The list of countries that have been actively discussed as golf destination and have been mentioned by interviewees is presented below in order to picture the scale of Russian golfers' choice.

- Turkey
- Egypt
- Tunisia
- Spain
- Ukraine
- Portugal
- Greece
- Finland
- France

- Switzerland
- Austria
- Germany
- Thailand
- Indonesia

It is interesting to notice that the scale of Russian golfers traveling is quite wide for a developing industry and a growing sport. However, 10 out of 14 the represented countries are located in Europe which enhances previous statements considering distance from home country as one of the most significant determinants in choosing golf destination. Another obvious finding is that 8 out 14 destinations are countries with warm and hot climates. This illustrates Russian travelers' strong willingness to visit countries in order to enjoy warm weather and perfect climate compared to Russia. Three destinations do not require visa from Russia citizens and another five countries are in the European Union which implies the requirement of single Shengen visa which is quite easy for Russians to get and offers convenience in traveling and flexibility in choosing the destination. Hence, Russian golf travelers create an image of "new tourists", which is a great development, comparing to the Soviet Union times, for example. What is pleasant to notice is that two countries of South East Asia are also on the list, which represents an existent interest of Russian golfers to the region. Another important discovery is that the world golf tourism leader, the United States of America and golf "founder" Great Britain were not covered in the discussions and were not mentioned by interviewees almost at all. Only one respondent who is an avid golfer said that he had an experience of golf playing in the USA and attends golf clubs in Scotland, Great Britain. This is a very interesting finding, since quite many Russians have traveled to the USA at a certain stage of life with certain purposes and the country stays a very popular dream destination as London (Great Britain) as well. However, it is very hard for Russians to receive a visa to both countries and this could be a serious reason for the lack of demand among golf players. The long distance between the USA and Russia is also a binding factor in this case. Of course, not all the countries from the presented list were covered in discussions to the same extent, but Russian golfer definitely choose them due to various reasons, the most popular among which appeared to be climate,

location, golf courses quality, prices, accommodation, service, supporting elements, atmosphere in the place, visa requirements and transportation convenience.

Constitutive number of discussions and opinions in golf forums were dedicated to traveling in general. As mentioned previously, respondents were also very eager to tell about their travel experiences and related perceptions along with expectations. This information is valuable and worth analysis since it illustrates Russian traveler consumer behaviour patterns and highlights the factors that influence it from general theoretical identifications. Factors affecting tourism purchase decision making process of Russian travelers partly matched with the factors illustrated in the model presented in chapter 6. First of all, family commitments proved to be one of the most significant factors internal to the tourist. All respondents and a large number of internet forums participants mentioned their family as trip company and were concerned about the choice of holiday activities for all family members. This fact can be also related to cultural factors since family is one of the core concepts of Russian culture. It is very important to notice that Russians prefer to travel with families and therefore tourism offers should base on satisfying needs of each family member and suggest maximum tailored products. Secondly, Russians' most loved type of a vacation is beach vacation and they do not image their perfect holidays without this component. The results of the practical interviews showed that every respondent mentioned picturesque beaches when talking about the best holidays of past experience and future dream ones. As stated before, opportunity to combine golf with vacation is something that all golfers seek for, beach destinations are the greatest request and appear to be one of the primary attractions.

Hobbies and interests are often important motivators for traveling, especially in golf tourists' case. Such hobbies as diving, snorkeling trekking and shopping are very popular among Russians and thus are sought for at the potential destination. Russian golfers were mentioning the described hobbies as important ones to be maintained at the travel destination. Sightseeing, rich cultural heritage and picturesque surrounding of travel destinations are very

popular characteristics that have been mentioned by the majority of the researched segment.

As it was already discovered, language barriers and visa requirements are often serious factors that prevent Russians from traveling to the destination. Finally, word of mouth recommendations of family and friends affect heavily Russians' consumer behaviour and purchase decision making process. This is also a concept and a specific feature of Russian culture. Internet forums were full of questions designed to get to know others' opinions about the destination, for example, however, the extent of such influence cannot be compared to friends' and family affection. Therefore it is obvious that travel companies should do everything possible in order to spread the most positive word of mouth.

The previous paragraph describes the most relevant factors that affect Russian travelers' consumer behaviour. Golf players that were researched confirmed that such factors are significant for them as well. These findings are necessary for identifying Russian golf tourist profile.

8.4 Ascertained results about South-East Asia as a golf destination for Russian golf tourists

This final part of the presentation of data analysis is about opinions concerning South East Asia as a golf destination. It was already discovered that Thailand and Indonesia were included in Russian golfers' "map" due to a number of reasons. Preventing factors had also been ascertained. The last question was about free choice between Spain and Singapore as a potential golf tourism destination; the same question had been addressed by the author of the thesis to forum participants. What is pleasant, is that respondents shared opinions not only concerning Singapore, but some of them also explained their perceptions about the whole region. Of course, traveling to Spain is much cheaper for Russians than reaching South East Asia region, and many people could have easily picked Singapore as an option, however, not all the replies demonstrated the choice of this wonderful country.

Russian golf profile, as it was ascertained previously, is really affected by the novelty of golf as a game, novelty of golf courses and golf tourism destinations. No wonder quite many respondents chose Singapore and explained their selection with high novelty of the country. The concept of exclusiveness was also mentioned by several respondents. Indeed, Singapore carries an image of a modern high tech country among Russians. Another a very important issue is that quite many golf players had already visited Spain and experienced playing golf there, hence they selected Singapore as an “unconquered” destination. Cultural feature – striving for all new definitely influences such choices. South East Asia is becoming a more popular tourism destination among Russia and more and more people travel to Thailand and Indonesia. Therefore, some of the Singapore choices are derived from this condition. An exotic, all year round hot climate turned out to be very attractive factor for a constitutive number of respondents which is not a surprise since the attractiveness of warm weather had already been highlighted in the previous part. However, some of the respondents mentioned that they would not like to play golf in a too hot climate, hence they preferred Spain. An opportunity to play golf during night made several respondents highly interested and they preferred Singapore. An avid part of golfers that had been addressed such a question, explained their choice of Singapore or South East Asia region in general with the large number of trophy courses that they would have loved to experience and “collect”. Respondents who picked Spain justified their choice with the distance and atmosphere meaning that Singapore seems to be located too far away from home environment and the country is imaged to be too different from Russia and golfers may feel very uncomfortable there.

It is valuable that opinions of the respondents differentiated, because thus it was possible to get an idea of Russian golfers’ image of the respected countries, image of South-East Asia, expectations for golf destination and important factors that they think of when making a destination choice.

South East Asia is an exotic region located on the other side of the world for Russians. The region attracts with its uniqueness, exclusiveness, mystery, culture and paradise climate. Golf facilities are incredible and Russian golfers

seem to be aware of this fact. Novelty is a winning point for the destination compared to European locations, however, it can be scary and too unexplored for some Russian golfers.

9 CONCLUSION

Golf tourism market is the biggest sport market and continues to develop fast all over the world. For many countries it is an emerging market and Russia is an example of such case. Golf started to develop in Russia only twenty one years ago and has been noticed to follow the pattern of an extremely vast growth which lead to an increase in the number of Russian golf players. Russian climate is not the most suitable one for maintaining constant golf hobby maintaining therefore the natural interest for traveling with golf purposes emerges.

South East Asia is a famous golf tourism destination that is able to offer a multitude of superior golf facilities. Moreover, the region possesses rich cultural heritage, picturesque nature and provides numerous activities to do. South East Asian climate is one of the hottest climates in the world and is maintained there all year round. A huge number of golf tourists come to the region in order to play golf or to combine the vacation with their favorite hobby. Hence, South East Asia is a very unique and perspective potential golf tourism destination for current and future Russian golf players and their families and friends.

Formulated during the research Russian golf profile contains typical features of modern golf profiles thus representing Russia as a country acquainted with golf, however, due to the novelty of sport in Russia, the profile is still going through stages of modifications and stronger formulations. The Russian government pays huge attention to the industry and attracts different powers, including financial resources, to the development of golf in the country. This is a strong base for the future growth and success of the industry. The results are not awaited for long – quantitative indicators concerning golf players and golf

facilities prove vast growth. Russian golf is striving to reach international level concerning facilities and professional players' success. Despite the fact that there is still much to do, because obviously Russia is not yet competitive with such world golf tourist leaders such as United States of America, the country definitely can count on future strong positions in golf and golf tourism industries.

In spite of a small number of golf players among the whole Russian population, there are avid golfers and core golfers for whom the sport is a lifestyle and plays a very significant role in life. Practical findings proved that such players consider golf one of their major motives to travel and implement their plans successfully trying various golf tourism destinations. During such attempts, attractive factors of golf destinations have been realized by Russian golfers. The research showed that quite many factors appeared to be similar to factors affecting theoretically tourism consumer behaviour, however, also ascertained special features relevant only to the Russian case. The study revealed that the possibility of the combination of vacation with golf, wide choice of supporting activities to do, quality of golf courses, accommodation, service, warm climate, beach presence, absence of visa receiving problems and good accessibility are the attractive factors for Russian golf players. South East Asia definitely matches the majority of the ascertained characteristics and is able to offer much more appealing aspects, however the long distance and different culture are negatively seen factors. However, the interest in South East Asia as tourism destination is growing fast among Russians and the most popular golf tourism destinations matched with top tourism destinations. Therefore it is justified to assume that South East Asia as a golf tourism destination will grow in popularity along with the regions' growth as a tourism destination, which has started already and demonstrates striking statistics.

The novelty of the region is one of the most appealing factors for Russian golfers. Moreover, Russians are always eager to experience new and exotic environment. However, taking into consideration that Russian golf tourism is a young and growing sector and Russian golf players only begin to explore golf destinations, starting from European locations as the research indicated, there is a threat that South East Asia can be too novel yet for them to explore.

However, since tourism industry has been growing rapidly, sport tourism has contributed significantly to such a development and Russian golf industry increase has demonstrated tremendous velocity, Russian golf profile has clear perspectives for golf tourism in South East Asia.

Finally, the research discovered and clearly described the current situation of golf in Russia. It is a very young yet vast developing industry with a high latent potential. The main reasons for that are the elite image of the sport in the country, little media coverage of golf and unsuitable climate. Golf appeared not to be the most primary motivator for Russian golfers to travel abroad – Russians are pursuing beach vacation wherever they go. This phenomenon exists due to the Russian consumer behaviour specifics and little amount of avid golf players. Thus, attractive factors of golf destinations for Russian golfers match with travel destinations' attractive features. Such result has a connection with a previous research question and practical results revealed the list of most influential ones.

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Preliminary structure of interview with golf players

- 1) How long have you been playing golf?
- 2) Why do you play golf?
- 3) Where and how often do you play?
- 4) How important is golf for you?
- 5) Would you like to combine holidays with golf? Would you like to travel abroad to play golf? Which country would you go to and why?
- 6) Who do you play golf with?
- 7) Do you travel a lot? Where? Why?
- 8) How much can invest in traveling per year? How much can you invest in golf per year?
- 9) Do you travel with golf purposes? Where? Why?
- 10) Describe your best holidays. Why did you consider it the best?
- 11) What is your image of ideal holidays? Where? With who?
- 12) Where would you prefer to play golf during high season? If had financial resources, where would you play golf – in Spain or in Singapore? Why?