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Consumer Decision-Making on Golf Equipment: Impact of Emerging Strategic Organizational Goals and Supply Chain Intricacies

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ABSTRACT

The game of golf is incredibly historic and enjoyed by many people from numerous different age groups across many parts of the world. The research involving the game of golf is often limited to the topics of golf club engineering and injury prevention within the game. The consumer decision-making process for golf equipment has been primarily under-researched. This study explores the consumer decision-making process involving golf equipment and provides propositions to achieve strategic organizational goals. Propositions are made concerning supply chain intricacies containing the inclusion of personalization and customization and including women's equipment displayed in marketing activities. There is room for further research regarding the consumer decision-making process for golf equipment, such as golf clubs and clothing, and encouraged empirical studies comparing multiple consumer demographics such as age, gender, and location. The marketing aspect of the game of golf is a promising endeavor for the growth and advancement of golf equipment manufacturers, specifically as the consumer decision-making process for this industry is further discovered.

Keywords: *Golf, consumer decision-making, Supply chain*

INTRODUCTION

The game of golf has been around for centuries as a way to exercise, pass the time, enjoy the outdoors, and conduct business. Golf has always been considered an elitist sport (Funnell, 2011). This perception drives the desire to have what is perceived as elite, having equipment and clothing while playing at the most expensive and prestigious golf courses. The first official rules were recorded in the 1500s (Golf College, 2018). Shortly after the game gained tremendous popularity in Europe, King James IV held the title of the first man to commission a set of golf clubs on record (Berhow, 2020). The elite would commission golf clubs for close to four hundred years before technology had advanced enough to mass-produce iron heads. Most of the progress in golf club improvement has occurred in the last thirty-five years. New technology and

designs are being released every couple of months, causing consumers to purchase golf equipment more often to keep up with the societal and performance standards that the game conveys. The game of golf has grown astronomically during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was an increase of 500,000 golfers in the United States from 2019 to 2020, the most dramatic growth in 17 years (Stachura, 2021). Because of the surge in new golfers and people returning to the game, the golf equipment industry excelled. A previously negative trendline quickly turned around to return to their previous sales and exceed them.

Most people who play golf for the fun desire to be looked upon as having high status and wealth. This judgment is made mainly by what equipment they carry in their bags, what clothes they wear, and where they play because of the costs associated with the label on those products (Nelissen and Meijers, 2011). People who purchase golf equipment are willing to spend more to fit in with the community they desire to be a part of at the golf course. A study by Ruyhley and Greenwell (2012) showed that the social nature of league play is a critical attribute of voluntary participation in sports. Tourists will rely heavily on the internet to find where they would like to play and even make tee times online (Daries et al., 2020). A strong online presence is essential in the golf industry, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Daries et al., 2020).

The internet can be an excellent way for consumers to find information about products, among other sources of information. Consumers find information on golf clubs in a variety of ways. There are countless ratings and comments on new equipment and golf courses by key influencers in golf magazines such as *Golf Digest*, *Golfweek*, and *Golf Magazine*; online articles such as *Golf.com* and *Golf Pass*; on television such as *Golf Channel* and *NBC Sports*; and through word of mouth. Consumers believe that when businesses have achieved or exceeded customer expectations, they should be rewarded by positive word of mouth. Consumers are also driven by their value system of altruism to share their less-than-desirable experiences with companies (Cheung et al., 2007). These reports can be biased and brutally honest, so companies must have a communication system in place to handle negative feedback (Cheung et al., 2007). This could significantly influence the success or lack thereof of a particular model or course. Not only could it hurt the success during that season, but it could also tarnish the company's brand equity.

Golf is on television four days a week for tournament play. The *Golf Channel* also runs various golf programs twenty-four hours a day. Manufacturers, as well as unrelated companies, will use this time to advertise their brands. Professional golfers will wear brands on their hats, bags, clothing, and clubs to show their loyalty and what equipment they are using in hopes of convincing the people watching that they, too, will be able to play at that level if they have the same equipment. Many children that want to play the game will desire the same equipment as their favorite player (Mutter and Powlowski, 2014). This could potentially create brand loyalty as the children grow up and need new equipment.

Consumers in the golf industry are very brand loyal because brand experience influences golfers' uncertainty towards other brands, but golfers' brand experience alone does not lead to brand loyalty (Chung and Peachey, 2021). There is a positive relationship between celebrity endorsement and increased positive attitudes toward stock price evaluation and purchase behaviors within brands (Knoll and Matthes, 2016). Consumers will identify with certain endorsers that allow them to feel connected with them (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011). They

then group themselves with those people to be a part of some elite league by association. This is based on the social identity theory put forth by Tajfel and Turner (1979). While golfers love to see people with high status and popularity wearing and using the same products they are, they also value real-life testimonies of average people playing golf (Martin, Bhimy, and Agee, 2002). The consumer's reference group, people they perceive as similar to themselves, will play a prominent role in decision-making (Cengage, 2018).

While consumers like to be associated with whom they want to be like, studies showed that nostalgic brand positioning had a more significant effect on brand passion and authenticity for females than for males (Gilal et al., 2021). However, for brand icons, the effect on brand passion and authenticity was equally important for males and females (Gilal et al., 2021). Seventy percent of teens trust social media influencers more than celebrities, and forty-nine percent of consumers depend on influencer recommendations to make purchase decisions (Carlson and Donavan, 2008).

The consumer decision-making process for golf equipment, including golf clubs and soft goods, is mainly undiscovered yet vastly important for consumers, designers, policymakers, and marketers (Robertson et al., 1998). Numerous consumer decision-making models support consumer decision-making for other purchases or purchases within specific industries. To the best knowledge of the authors, there are not currently any consumer decision-making models that are specific to golf equipment. The development of such a model and further research into the consumer decision-making process can benefit numerous decision-makers within the industry. This paper will explore the consumer decision-making process involving golf equipment while providing propositions involving supply chain intricacies and strategic organizational goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous theories regarding consumer behavior that has resulted in different models. These theories and models are the results of analyses of consumption behavior. Consumer behavior is considered to be all consumer activities related to the purchase, use, and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental, and behavioral retorts pertaining to these activities (Kardes, Cronley, and Cline, 2015). As mentioned by Stankevich (2017), Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best (2007) said, "All marketing decisions are based on assumptions of knowledge of consumer behavior." The traditional consumer decision-making model involves a five-step process including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase behavior (Stankevich, 2017). Some other models include the Nicosia model (1996), the Howard Sheth model (1969), the Engel Kollat Blackwell model (1970), the Black box model (1999), and the Hawkins Stern theory (1962). Different people have put forth these models with other intentions for their use. Each model can be applied to different situations and industries consumers interact with. The golf industry can significantly benefit from a model that is specific to itself and involves a combination of the models explained as follows.

The traditional model is the base from which many other rational consumer decision-making models are formed. This structure allows additional consideration toward each of the five areas. A model specific to golf equipment would likely be accurate and effective by expanding the

traditional model by including elements from other consumer decision-making models and adding components specific to golf equipment.

The Howard Sheth model (1969) and Engel Kollat Blackwell's (1972) model are very similar. The differences between these two models lie in the relationship between the variables that influence the precision process (M., 2019, MBA Knowledge Base, 2014). The Engle Kollat Blackwell model includes individual characteristics (motives, values, lifestyles, and personality), social influences (culture, reference group, and family), and situational influences. Some variables, including the importance of the purchase, personality variables, social class, culture, organization, time pressure, and financial status, are included in the Howard Sheth Model. The Nicosia model (1966) is more simplified than the previously mentioned models but contains some of the same elements, such as consumer attitude, search, and motivation. The Nicosia model focuses on the link between the firm and its possible consumers while describing the purchase decision process for a new product, differentiating it from the other models (Panwar et al., 2019). These relatively traditional models display a cycle that starts at a specific point and flows back to the beginning once the entire process is over.

The following two models that will be explained take a different and less traditional approach to consumer behavior. The Black box model (2004) is used when people do not entirely comprehend the factors that influence them. This model includes three major components: environment, buyer's black box, and buyer's responses. The Black box model makes understanding why a consumer makes purchasing decisions difficult. Still, it is an excellent way to understand the consumer decision-making process. It suggests that consumers are likely to make unnecessary purchases because the purchase has become a habit (Neostrom, 2021) (Classens, 2022). The Hawkins Stern model (1962) revolves around the consumer decision-making process for impulse decisions, which is a different perspective than the Engel Kollat and Blackwell model, Nicosia model, and Howard Sheth model that show consumers make logical decisions for all products (Agarwal and Chetty, 2021).

There has been limited research on developing a consumer behavior model specific to the golf equipment industry. A new model would require elements specific to consumer behavior when purchasing golf equipment. With the rise of women's involvement in the game of golf, one factor that should be considered is that women are more likely to thoroughly consider alternatives and make emotional decisions than men (Lee et al., 2006, Lee et al., 2011). The difference in purchase behavior patterns, such as emotion and impulsivity, between men and women can be accounted for by including components from previous models designed toward rational and emotional decisions.

The marketing mix (product, price, distribution channels, promotion, and advertising, service quality, and brand personality), psychological aspects (attitude, motivation, emotion, perception, experience, and consumer personality), individual features (income, age, gender, and education level), social factors (family, reference groups, social class, and opinion leaders), and cultural influences (culture and religion) affect consumer behavior (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018). The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) of the study showed that the marketing mix is the most important influencing factor for the consumer decision-making process. The marketing mix is followed by psychological aspects, individual features, social factors, and cultural influences, respectively (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018).

The first step in consumer decision-making is the need or problem recognition stage. It begins when a problem arises, and the consumer realizes a difference between their actual and desired state (Dudovskiy, 2013). Motivation is the wish to solve a problem that was recognized. Motivation is affected when consumers consider something personally applicable, consistent with their self-concept, values, needs, goals, emotions, and self-control processes; risky; and somewhat conflicting with their previous attitudes (Hoyer et al., 2017). Golf equipment consumers recognize different needs. Different motives support these needs. Since equipment produced by different manufacturers has the same overall purpose, motives will greatly affect the purchase decision.

The product itself plays a significant role in the decision-making process when it comes to purchasing equipment for the game of golf (Shavitt, 1989). Golf clubs tend to be similar when comparing different manufacturers' models, but each has slight differences that complement different individuals (Johnson, 2018). Soft goods, such as hats, clothing, and bags, vary in style within and between manufacturers. Because the technology, style, and purpose of the components discussed are similar, consumer decision-making in this industry is primarily based on other factors such as price, availability, previous brand interaction, and level of customization available. There is still a need or desire for the product or experience in order to make sales.

Information search is a key step in each of the consumer decision-making models that were previously mentioned. This step involves the internal and external search for information to help make a purchase decision. Internal information search includes previous knowledge or past experiences with the product (Kardes and Cline, 2015). Golfers will recall what brand of equipment they currently have and use their evaluation of that brand to make future purchase decisions. The equipment that golfers currently use or have used in the past is likely to significantly impact their purchase decision. They will also recall any brand names that they have heard of or been exposed to and evaluate those options (Dudovskiy, 2013).

External information search is any other type of search for information about the product that the consumer recognizes a need for. External information search can be obtained from personal sources, market sources, or product trials (Kardes and Cline, 2015). About eighty-five percent of golfers use personal references as their primary information source for purchasing golf clubs (Yoh, 2006). This is valuable information for understanding the consumer decision-making process for golf equipment. A consumer decision-making model specific to golf equipment could likely benefit from the inclusion of personal references as part of external information search as well as the addition of the marketing mix and environment of the consumer.

The evaluation of alternatives stage in the consumer decision-making process is when the consumer compares the products discovered in the information search. Consumers will compare prices among alternatives, especially if the products are very similar or the consumer does not know how often they will use them. When several products have similar functions and are difficult to differentiate, consumers will likely use experiential attributes and contexts to make evaluations (Josko Brakus et al., 2008). When a consumer finds a manufacturer and model of the club that works for them and their swing, they will most likely find all of the clubs of that series, so they will all match (Baek et al., 2020). Personal preference or style is a large part of consumer behavior when purchasing golf equipment.

The consumer will categorize the products into three categories: the evoked set, the inept set, and the inert set. The evoked set is the set of products that will ultimately be considered in the final decision. The inept set consists of the products the consumer does not consider. The inert set is the products that the consumer is aware of but does not consider for their final decision. When the evoked set is composed, they will make a final selection if they are financially and psychologically capable (Niosi, 2021).

Availability and time pressure will greatly influence the categorization of products, ultimately influencing the consumer's purchase decision (Chaturvedi, 2015). It is accurate to assume that accessibility and time sensitivity, as used by the Howard Sheth model, would be a great addition to a consumer decision-making model for golf equipment (M., 2020). This will specifically help to account for consumption behavior differences between men and women.

The following two stages of the consumer decision-making process are the actual purchase and the consumer's post-purchase behavior. The consumers will make the purchase when the evaluation of alternatives is completed, and they have narrowed down their options to one choice. If the consumers cannot narrow down their evoke set to one product, or some other factors prevent them from making the purchase, they will not buy the product, and the consumer decision-making process is completed at this point.

The consumer's post-purchase behavior occurs when the consumer uses the product, then evaluates their satisfaction, indifference, or dissatisfaction with it (Day, 1977). When it is time to get a new club or several new clubs, the switching costs will likely be too high. Higher switching costs will probably cause the consumer to continue purchasing within the brand they had previously purchased from (Gourville and Soman, 2014). If the consumer is dissatisfied with the product and the issue is not resolved, they are expected to speak negatively about the product or brand (Stankevich, 2017). Conversely, if consumers are satisfied with their purchase, they are prone to become loyal customers and speak highly about the product to their friends and family (Cheung et al., 2007). At this point, the consumer will likely start the process again once a new need for golf equipment is recognized.

Developing a consumer decision-making model will help marketers understand their consumers (Kardes et al., 2015). This allows the company to build connections with the people using their product and create an effective marketing strategy (Kardes et al., 2015). Marketers also need an effective marketing strategy that reflects the game's advancements, technology and research, and world events. This will likely be achieved through the propositions that are to be suggested.

The golf game grew during the Covid-19 pandemic, causing the demand for golf equipment to rise (Stachura, 2021). There are 25 to 30 percent more rounds of golf being played at some private golf courses, while golf rounds played at public golf courses increased by up to 60 percent (McGregor, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the wait time for receiving golf clubs to increase (Thomas, 2021) dramatically. Manufacturers such as Titleist, Taylormade, PING, and Callaway have increased the time it takes them to make, assemble, and ship out orders from 1 to 2 to upwards of 8 to 12 weeks (Webb, 2021). The virus began in China and harmed manufacturing plants in Asia. This resulted in significant supply chain disruptions and delays in getting products to the consumer market (Ahonen, 2022).

Dual sourcing, when a company uses both an onshore and offshore supplier, is the best solution for sourcing issues when there is a limited range of disruption frequencies (Pochard, 2003). The cost of adopting an additional source is very high. A company should adjust its sourcing strategy over time; however, if it is possible for the manufacturer to slow down the investment decision, it can increase the value of the dual-sourcing process. Dual sourcing can help create flexibility in the supply chain to protect itself against supply chain disruptions, giving them a competitive advantage (Pochard, 2003).

A detailed map of the supply chain should be carried out to accurately and efficiently prepare for supply disruptions (Zhu, Chou, and Tsai, 2020). Technology development has allowed for a high level of real-time supply chain visibility. Supply chain visibility is a complex issue, but necessary, nevertheless. A study by Wei and Wang (2010) showed that four different parts to supply chain visibility helps to drive the reconfigurability of supply chains. The listed constructs are visibility for sensing, learning, coordinating, and integrating. The research conducted yielded that the visibility for sensing has a direct impact on supply chain strategic performance. The other three constructs are essential for enhancing supply chain reconfigurability. All of these combined create strategic value in supply chains. Supply chain visibility allows firms to gain a competitive advantage by reconfiguring supply chain resources (Wei and Wang, 2010).

Manufacturing managers are often pressured to decrease inventories in order to lower costs making it difficult to maintain safety stock when housing inventory is usually so expensive. It is crucial to hold some safety stock, however. Many manufacturers have safety stock in areas of the supply chain that will not yield the greatest benefit if it needs to be used. A study by Graves and Willems (2000) shows where and how to hold safety stock efficiently using a model resembling a spanning tree. Managers are not likely to be successful if they rely on outdated approaches to supply chain management in the new economy (Pochard, 2003). The Covid-19 pandemic and others that could potentially happen in the future would likely boost sales in the golf industry if the correct adjustments, such as dual sourcing, supply chain visibility, and an increase in safety stock, are made to the current supply chain.

P_{1a}: Supply chain adjustments, such as dual sourcing, supply chain visibility, and an increase in safety stock, will likely minimize the effect of global manufacturing issues in the golf equipment industry, such as those exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

P_{1b}: Dual sourcing, supply chain visibility, and an increase in safety stock will likely improve the operational, financial, and market performance of golf equipment manufacturers.

Supply chain risk management often adopted by companies was limited to top-tier suppliers before the Covid-19 pandemic. This made the entire supply chain vulnerable to major issues due to minor issues regarding the lower-tier suppliers that were not previously given much attention (Zhu, Chou, and Tsai, 2020). Supply chain risk management can affect firms' operational, market, and financial performance, which qualifies it as a strategic management activity (Narasimhan and Talluri, 2009).

Supply chain adjustments can allow manufacturers to have trial equipment, especially when sales are surging. Consumers of golf clubs are likely to want to test the equipment or try on clothing

before they invest. Manufacturers must have demo equipment at retail locations (Chung and Peachey, 2021). A study by Chung and Peachey (2021) revealed that doubts about a given brand would decrease when the consumer can have a sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual interaction with the brand. "Demo Days" are a great way for consumers to try golf clubs on the driving range before buying them.

Many golf clubs need to be customized, and there are relatively few places to do that. Most of the time, golf clubs are ordered through a distributor or representative of the manufacturer and arrive to the consumer shortly after. Sometimes, it is impossible to experience the product before purchase physically. The interactive experience of using the consumer's swing measurements to build their ideal club on the internet can help increase the consumer's perceived quality and minimize the risk of their purchase, which will likely increase their perceived value and brand loyalty (Yoo and Park, 2016). The product's perceived value, before or at the time of purchase, is a considerable predictor of customer satisfaction after the purchase (Yoo and Park, 2016). A study by Chung and Peachey showed that brand experience increases consumers' uncertainties about competing products, specifically in the golf club industry (Chung and Peachey, 2020).

When a company cannot have the product in front of the consumer and the purchase is conducted online, there must be several communication forms between the manufacturer and consumer (Weathers, Sharma, and Wood, 2007). Individualism is the only cultural dimension significantly affecting purchase intention (Moon et al., 2008). Franke et al. (2010) found that the "I designed it myself" attitude creates economic value for the consumer. They also found that this feeling created a sense of accomplishment and increased the consumer's willingness to pay. Customization allows users to select specific product design elements to fit their desires. Personalization occurs when the firm creates designs or communication channels to meet customers' needs. The main difference lies in who is making changes (Babich, 2017).

P₂: Golf equipment marketers and manufacturers can increase perceived value to consumers by creating a sense of accomplishment, including personalization and customization.

Self-expressive customization can improve task performance using the said product (Kaiser, Schreier, Janiszewski, 2017). The customization of a product can help develop an identity for the product. As mentioned earlier, consumers want to purchase products that will associate them with a group they desire to be a part of or a group they feel they are currently a part of. Golf has been known as an elitist sport, but advancements in the game have allowed different communities to connect through golf.

Historically, golf has been a gentlemen's game, creating the idea that it is not meant for women to participate in it. There are still courses in different parts of the world that do not allow women (Newsham, 2021). According to Dobson (2021), Augusta National, the most prestigious golf course in the United States, has only newly allowed women to enter the premises, be a member, and play the golf course. With the rise of gender equality in today's society, a marketing shift and a range of products have increased to include women. Some companies still do not participate in this advancement which has caused deterrence from their brand (Ma, 2020).

Golf is behind when it comes to creating gender fluidity because of the history of this sport. Some manufacturers are taking advantage of the new inclusion of women in golf. They have

jumped at the opportunity to be represented by female athletes, which has, in turn, promoted the sales of equipment and clothing designed for females. Advertisements that are androgynous or inclusive of all people are more likely to be successful in reaching people no matter who they are (Timke and O'Barr, 2017).

The low number of women playing golf is a result of the gender-based discriminatory patterns within the game. They go on to say that the gender gap between men and women within the golf industry can be lessened by marketers and managers (Reis and Correia, 2006). Marketing strategies need to be directed toward creating a need-recognition among women. Women need to know that there are options for them to participate in the golf industry. This could be done by creating an advertisement that promotes products created for women, showcasing women's clothing in stores, and creating opportunities for women to come together at golf courses. The Ladies Professional Golf Association has drastically improved its advertising campaigns, but equipment manufacturers are still lacking in this area.

- P_{3a}:** The addition of women's products and marketing activities geared towards females will likely increase sales for manufacturers and golf courses alike from female consumers.
- P_{3b}:** Brand awareness for golf equipment manufacturers will likely increase due to adding marketing activities and products directed towards women because of males' heightened interest in the LPGA.

The fastest-growing sector in the US golf population since 2010 is girls under eighteen (LPGA, 2022). These girls will soon become the future of women's golf. Women pay more attention than men to physical representations, cleanliness, and appearance of service encounters. They also found out that women tend to view shopping in physical stores as more exciting than men, so they are more likely to take their time to compare alternatives (Lee et al., 2011). Women are more likely to make a decision concerning emotion, and women are also more likely to make a planned purchase than men (Lee et al., 2006). Males value the ease of online shopping more than women (Hasan, 2010). Men have a higher interest score for the LPGA than women (Park and Stotlar, 2006). Marketing focusing on women's golf can cause men to become more interested in the game and create a need recognition for women. An increase in interest in the brand because of inclusive marketing will most likely increase sales and brand awareness.

FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are few peer-reviewed journal articles on business in the golf industry, and even fewer regarding the consumer decision-making process in golf. There are numerous articles about golf equipment in trade journals and magazines such as *Links*, *Golfweek*, *Golf Digest*, and *Golf World*. These sources can be beneficial for golfers, but scholarly articles can help highlight the consumer decision-making process. Academic journals relevant to golf mostly contain ideas regarding the engineering of the equipment or injury cause and prevention. There are not currently any consumer decision-making models for golf equipment, to the best knowledge of the authors of this paper. The golf equipment industry is largely under-researched, explicitly dealing with consumer behavior. The game of golf has a great history, but its delayed growth in popularity has prohibited the advancement of marketing within and through the sport. There is

much to be learned about the consumer decision-making process in golf before significant marketing advancements are made.

Further research needs to be conducted to understand better consumer behavior towards golf equipment, specifically the consumer decision-making model. A model must be developed to reflect this research's findings and future research. A combination of a qualitative study based on in-depth reviews with golfers and quantitative research using survey and experiment methods will help to identify specific attributes relative to consumer behavior involving golf equipment. There is also a need to understand the potential effects that gender might have on consumer decision-making. The differences between general male and female consumer behavior have been discussed. Still, no findings are known to the authors of this paper of this study being conducted within the golf industry.

There are opportunities for further research regarding consumer behavior differences between other demographics, such as children and adults. Adults are far more likely to purchase, but children can significantly influence them (Baldassarre, Campo, and Falcone, 2016). There is general marketing research to assume the difference in consumer behavior between children and adults, but this is not specific to the game of golf. With the rise of young players, specifically young girls, studies that show the difference between children's and adults' behavior could be valuable information for marketers to increase sales and brand awareness.

Future research can also be conducted to determine how regional differences impact consumer behavior, specifically if the consumer is national or international relative to the manufacturer. Demographic differences in consumers can be valuable information to marketers. The advancement in the consumer decision-making process for golf is not limited to discovering differences in consumer behavior based on different demographics. One example of an opportunity for non-demographic research is rule changes. This does not happen often, but when they do, it can affect what equipment is legal to play with in tournament golf. There is currently a proposition by the United States Golf Association to reduce the maximum driver length from forty-eight inches to forty-two inches (Harig, 2021). While not many players choose a driver over forty-six inches, this will still affect how drivers are engineered and sold to the public. Further research can be conducted to see the effect of rule changes on consumer behavior.

The opportunity for further research is heightened because golf is growing faster than ever. This growth is shown through an increase in the number of people starting to play the game, the number of people returning to the game or playing more often, and the sudden and dramatic increase in demand for golf equipment (McGregor, 2020; Stachura, 2021). This growth began simultaneously with the Covid-19 pandemic (Thomas, 2020). This sudden increase in interest in golf created a problem for equipment manufacturer supply chains, for they were not ready for the sudden rise in demand (Webb, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic is not the only world event to dramatically affect the game of golf.

Another example of this is World War II when golf began to grow, and the game, as well as its players, were seen as patriotic (Shipnuck, 2020). Dual sourcing, supply chain visibility, and an

increase in safety stock can help lessen the issues that might arise if another world event, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, occurs. Future studies can be conducted to observe how different golf clubs, as well as other industries, manufacturers have adjusted for a surge in demand during the Covid-19 pandemic to see what adjustments if any, helped limit supply chain issues.

Golf equipment manufacturers will significantly benefit from the personalization and customization of their marketing strategies and products. Personalization and customization make customers feel included and valued (Franke et al., 2010). This will ultimately increase the brand's perceived value and product, leading to brand loyalty. An empirical study should be conducted to see if the previously acknowledged study applies to consumers of golf equipment.

Marketing directed towards women will likely increase sales for manufacturers and golf courses. There has been significant growth in the number of women who play the game of golf (LPGA, 2022). Women view shopping as an experience and are likely to purchase based on emotion (Lee et al., 2006). Empirical research is encouraged to derive knowledge from experience regarding the difference between men and women during the consumer decision-making process for golf equipment. Marketing activities and products directed towards women in the LPGA will likely increase brand awareness, mainly because of men's amplified interest in this tour.

The propositions made in this paper will likely increase the effectiveness of golf equipment manufacturers' marketing strategies and supply chains. The suggestions for further research above will greatly deepen the knowledge of consumer behavior for golf equipment manufacturer marketers. This will allow for the development of an accurate consumer decision-making model. The result of such a model has the potential to continue the growth of golf equipment manufacturing.

Managers need to keep up with the new economy by updating their strategic approaches to supply chain management to optimize productivity, mainly during events such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Pochard, 2003). Managers will likely optimize their supply chain and have protection against uncontrollable events shutting down a plant if they restructure in a way that allows for dual sourcing. This may need to take place over an extended period of time because of costs and disruptions made to other parts of the manufacturer's overall structure. Dual sourcing will likely allow the firm to gain a competitive advantage and shield itself from dramatic supply chain predicaments (Pochard, 2003). Once a firm differentiates itself from its competitors, it gains a competitive advantage. Supply chain visibility will also likely help the manufacturers gain a competitive advantage (Wei and Wang, 2010). Many options for technology allow for real-time supply chain visibility. This is an essential investment for managers to optimize operational processes while having a clear view of their financial expenditure to maximize efficiency for the resources invested.

Managers are constantly under pressure to decrease unnecessary costs. One area that is often cut is inventories, especially when golf equipment requires levels of customization and personalization. This is a dangerous cut, primarily to deal with significant supply chain disruptions. Managers must determine the correct amount of safety stock to hold to be ready for

supply chain disturbances. This will likely help the manufacturer's market performance when demand is high, or production is shut down.

Golf equipment managers can significantly benefit from the inclusion of personalization and customization. Managers will likely increase the perceived value of their brand by allowing consumers to customize their equipment. They will also increase the customer's willingness to pay (Franke et al., 2010). Golf equipment manufacturers need to allow an opportunity that enables the consumer to express themselves through their equipment. This will also help retain customers as self-expressive customization will likely improve the product's performance and increase the likelihood that they will be loyal to the brand in the future (Kaiser, Schreier, Janiszewski, 2017).

Marketers of golf equipment need to keep in mind opportunities for further growth of their brand and the game as a whole. Because the fastest-growing segment in the US golf population since 2010 is girls under eighteen, women's golf equipment needs attention (LPGA, 2022). There is an excellent opportunity for golf equipment manufacturers to increase sales by adding women's products and marketing activities. Women's involvement in the game of golf is growing, and golf equipment manufacturers will likely experience great success if they include them in their marketing strategy. Marketing to women can also increase brand awareness among men, as men have a higher interest score for the LPGA than women (Park and Stotlar, 2006). Marketers can improve sales and brand awareness for golf equipment by including women in their marketing activities and products.

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