Sport Diplomacy on the Green: Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a Platform for Indonesia–Australia Engagement

INDIVIDUAL PROJECT THESIS

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MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
INSTITUT IPMI
JAKARTA 2026

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Jakarta, 19 Oktober 2026



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Abstract

Premium leisure events are being employed by corporations, tour operators, and destination marketers for connection building and cross-border company development, however they are rarely researched as business efforts. As Indonesia-Australia relations grow under IA-CEPA, Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, a privately run golf and tourism program in Australia and Tasmania, brought together Indonesian and Australian business communities, public figures, and social elites through golf, hospitality, cultural tourism, and organised business-to-business (B2B) networking. In order to comprehend its results and provide strategies for enhancing subsequent editions, this retrospective study examines and assesses the 2025 edition event. It looks at how the event opened doors for commercial collaboration between Australia and Indonesia, how golf used soft power and sports diplomacy to foster trust, and how it truly brought people together to form global business relationships. The study also examines the lessons that businesses, government agencies, and event planners might take away from the event. Sports diplomacy and soft power are used as auxiliary concepts in the study, which primarily focuses on networking and business partnerships. It also alludes to theories of social capital, multinational commercial networks, and relationship marketing through events. This study focuses on a single case study and employs a qualitative descriptive methodology. Three interviewees the event founder, the Australian operational partner, and a member of the business community were chosen based on their engagement in the event, and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. An examination of recorded event activities and an analysis of event materials provided support for the interviews. After that, a soft power framework, symbolic interaction, and theme analysis were used to examine the data. By relating business network theory to sports diplomacy, this paper seeks to advance scholarly inquiry. Additionally, it provides useful recommendations for enhancing participant selection, event preparation, collaboration with universities, and preserving business ties beyond the event. However, the results cannot be broadly extended to other events or nations outside of the Indonesia–Australia setting because the study only looks at one small-scale pilot event with three participants.

Keywords: Sport Diplomacy, Golf Tourism, Business Networking, Marsh Golf Leisure, Indonesia–Australia Relations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract **2**

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION **8**

1.1 Background 8

1.2 Research Questions 19

1.3 Research Objectives 19

1.4 Significance of the Study 20

1.5 Scope and Limitations 22

1.6 Previous Studies 23

1.7 Thesis Structure 25

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW **27**

2.1 Sport Diplomacy 27

2.2 Soft Power Theory 30

2.2.1 Soft Power and Public Diplomacy 35

2.2.2 Symbolism and Social Capital in Soft Power 36

2.2.3 Soft Power in the Context of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 37

2.3 People-to-People Diplomacy 40

2.4 Transnational Business Networks 44

2.5 Business Perspective: Event-Based Relationship Marketing and Business Development 47

2.6 Conceptual Framework 50

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **55**

3.1 Research Approach 55

3.2 Research Design 58

3.3 Data Collection Methods 59

3.4 Sampling and Informants 60

3.5 Interview Design and Semi-Structured Interview Guide 62

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques 65

3.7 Validity and Reliability 66

3.8 Ethical Considerations 68

CHAPTER IV: SPORT DIPLOMACY ON THE GREEN: MARSH GOLF LEISURE 2025 AS PLATFORM FOR INDONESIA–AUSTRALIA ENGAGEMENT **69**

4.1 Analysis and Findings 69

4.2 Golf as Symbolic and Soft Power Diplomacy 70

4.3 Golf as an Informal Engagement Space: People-to-People Diplomacy and Symbolic Interaction 71
4.4 Business Networking as Economic Diplomacy: Transnational Networks and Social Capital 72
4.5 The Distinctive Character of Golf as an Elite Networking Platform 73
4.6 Sustaining the Network: The Informant as Ecosystem Orchestrator 76
4.7 Cross-Cutting Discussion: Implications for the Research Questions 77
4.8. Analysis Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a Platform for Indonesia–Australia Engagement 78
4.2 Thematic Findings 80
4.2.1 Theme One: Golf as Elite Networking Infrastructure 81
4.2.2 Theme Two: The Event as a Reciprocal National Showcase 83
4.2.3 Theme Three: The Narrative Integration of a Total Diplomatic Experience 85
4.2.4 Theme Four: Informality as a Diplomatic Mechanism 88
4.2.5 Theme Five: The Attraction-to-Transaction Sequence 90
4.3 Cross-Theoretical Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 92
4.3.1 Soft Power and Symbolic Capital Revisited 93
4.3.2 People-to-People Diplomacy: The Founder as a Relational Node 94
4.3.3 Transnational Business Networks: Embeddedness on the Fairway 95
4.3.4 Symbolic Performance: Frontstage Hospitality, Backstage Negotiation 96
4.3.5 Reflexivity and the Limits of a Single-Informant Narrative 97
4.4 Situating the Findings within the 2026 Indonesia-Australia Bilateral Context 98
4.6 Analysis Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 101
4.6.1. Purpose and Positioning of This Analysis 102
4.6.2. Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a Platform for Bilateral Engagement 103
4.6.3. Golf as an Instrument of Soft Power and Symbolic Diplomacy 106
4.6.4. People-to-People Connections and Transnational Business Networking 110
4.5. Implications for Indonesia–Australia Relations 115
4.5.1 A relational layer beneath formal diplomacy 115
4.5.2 Cumulative, longitudinal impact logic 115
4.5.3 Spillover into Subnational Government Engagement 117
4.6. Cross-Cutting Theme: Curation as a Boundary Condition 120
4.7. Mapping Craven's Themes onto the Conceptual Framework 123
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 125
5.1 Conclusion 125
5.2 Recommendations for Future Research 127
References 129

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Conceptual Framework of Premium Leisure-Based Sport Diplomacy 50
Table 3.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide Mapped to the Research Questions 63
Table 4.1 Derived from the Founder's Interview 81

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

High-end leisure events are becoming a crucial tool for the growth of international business. In order to draw in high-value customers, foster trust with potential partners, and open up new markets, businesses, tour operators, and destination marketers are increasingly creating experiences that blend sport, travel, and hospitality with organised networking (Getz, 2008). In order to draw in high-value customers, foster trust with potential partners, and open up new markets, businesses, tour operators, and destination marketers are increasingly creating experiences that blend sport, travel, and hospitality with organised networking (Getz, 2008). A modern example of such an endeavour is Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, a golf and tourist program that brought together Indonesian and Australian corporate groups in Australia and Tasmania. Therefore, this study primarily looks at the event as a business case: how a premium leisure event that is privately organised generates value for its organisers, the participating companies, and the broader business connection between Indonesia and Australia. Instead of using diplomatic and soft power notions as ends in and of themselves, the following sections employ them as supporting lenses to show how they create business value. Diplomacy is no longer limited to formal conversations carried out solely by state entities in the modern global period.

Diplomacy has extended to incorporate multi-actor interaction engaging non-state actors, civil society, corporations, and transnational communities as a result of the post-Cold War restructuring of international relations (Hocking, 2006; Melissen, 2005). This shift demonstrates that formal behind-the-desk talks between countries are no longer the exclusive aspect of diplomacy. Often referred to as "new diplomacy" or "network diplomacy," it also entails unofficial contact, cultural exchanges, and public involvement, all of which aid in improving mutual understanding and fostering closer ties between nations. Non-traditional diplomatic tools including sport diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and economic diplomacy have become more prominent within this larger shift. The importance of values, identity, and cultural interchange in promoting global understanding is highlighted by cultural diplomacy (Mark, 2009). Trade, investment, and business networks are all incorporated into foreign policy strategy through economic diplomacy (Berridge, 2015). Sport diplomacy, on the other hand, is becoming more widely acknowledged as a separate but connected area that uses athletes, athletic events, and activities as instruments of soft power projection and international engagement (Murray, 2012; Murray & Pigman, 2014). Joseph Nye's (2004) theory of soft power, which describes how nations can influence the preferences and decisions of others by attraction and persuasion rather than force or coercion, has a significant impact on the idea of sports diplomacy.

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and decisions of others by attraction and persuasion rather than force or coercion, has a significant impact on the idea of sports diplomacy. Strong symbolic appeal, emotional resonance, and universal accessibility make sport a powerful tool for fostering interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and trust (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Sports events also frequently create politically neutral environments that foster cooperation and communication even in the face of diplomatic tensions (Cha, 2009). As a result, sports diplomacy has grown in importance as a means of fostering closer ties between nations. An excellent illustration of how sports may foster new opportunities for collaboration and fortify diplomatic connections outside of conventional means is the relationship between Indonesia and Australia.

Political difficulties, security concerns, asylum laws, and divergent regional priorities have all influenced the two nations' relations throughout history (McRae, 2017; Wesley, 2010). The West Papua issue, Australia's 2013 surveillance on Indonesian authorities, and ongoing disputes over asylum-seeker policies are just a few examples of these tensions. The two nations' relationship has occasionally suffered as a result of these circumstances. Nonetheless, Indonesia and Australia have worked to improve their relationship over the last ten years by creating more organised and transparent channels of cooperation. Nonetheless, both nations have steadily improved their relationship over the last ten years by establishing more structured and formal methods of cooperation.

This is evident in the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) in August 2024, which enables the armed forces of both countries to operate across each

other's territories as part of a shared commitment to regional security in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the signing of the Treaty on Common Security in November 2025, which Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described as marking a new chapter in bilateral relations.

At the same time, economic interdependence between Indonesia and Australia has grown significantly, particularly through the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), which entered into force on 5 July 2020. Since IA-CEPA's implementation, bilateral trade has nearly tripled, rising from USD 12.91 billion to USD 35.38 billion in 2024, positioning Indonesia as one of Australia's strategic trading partners in the region. During 2024–25, Indonesia ranked as Australia's ninth-largest two-way trading partner and tenth-largest export market, while economic cooperation continued to expand through initiatives such as KONESKI and the KITA SEHAT Health Transformation Partnership. This cooperative framework has been further reinforced by the adoption of the Plan of Action for the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2025–2029, which encompasses economic cooperation, security, climate action, and people-to-people relations as its principal pillars.

These structural foundations, including geographic proximity, economic interdependence, and formal institutional frameworks, have in turn encouraged the exploration of alternative mechanisms of engagement beyond conventional diplomatic channels. This phenomenon has increasingly been examined in contemporary international relations literature through the lens of sport diplomacy. The concept is rooted in Joseph

Nye's notion of soft power, which holds that cultural attraction, values, and social practices can serve as instruments of influence without coercion (Nye, 1990, 2004).

In their analysis, Postlethwaite, Jenkin, and Sherry (2023) clarify that sport diplomacy functions both at the micro level through regular, small-scale cross-cultural interactions and exchanges as well as through mega-events like the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup. In contrast to traditional major sporting events, such micro-level sport diplomacy takes place on a daily basis through varied sport-based intercultural encounters. This feature is especially pertinent to understanding the function of golf tournaments like Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. Grix and Brannagan (2024) also describe sportswashing and soft power as two tactics that operate at various stages but share the same fundamental process: the strategic exploitation of sport by state and non-state actors to further particular foreign policy goals.

Creak and Trotier (2024) describe how athletic events like the SEA Games promote regional collaboration and ties among ASEAN nations in the setting of Southeast Asia. Additionally, their study demonstrates how informal diplomacy also referred to as "track-two diplomacy" can be used through sports to strengthen bonds between people. Instead of taking their place, this promotes official diplomatic ties between governments and influential state officials. In a similar vein, Esherick, Baker, Jackson, and Sam (2017) highlight through comparative case studies how important institutional context and the networks of non-governmental actors such as the business community and private sector—are to the success of sport diplomacy. Golf holds a unique place in the spectrum of sport

diplomacy and has historically been linked to elite corporate networks, international corporations, and policymaking circles.

Golf holds a unique place in the spectrum of sport diplomacy and has historically been linked to elite corporate networks, international corporations, and policymaking circles. Even though golf events are typically smaller in scale, they can still play a significant role in supporting informal diplomacy, in contrast to football and other mass-spectator sports that are primarily focused on nation branding through broad public audiences (El-Dabt, AlReshaid, Park, AlBuloushi, & Al-Enzi, 2025). These gatherings provide a more informal and comfortable setting for public personalities, business executives, and diplomats to engage and create relationships outside of official behind-the-desk discussions. One example of how golf might improve ties between Indonesians and Australians is Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and IA-CEPA are two examples of the current cooperation between the two nations that might be strengthened by the connections, ideas, and partnerships that were made possible by this event. This demonstrates how sporting and recreational activities can provide significant chances for unofficial diplomacy and global business networking.

Unlike mega-sporting events that focus primarily on mass audiences and national prestige, premium leisure sporting events such as golf tournaments often operate at a more intimate scale, facilitating elite-level interaction among business leaders, policymakers, and influential social actors through what Postlethwaite, Jenkin, and Sherry (2023) describe as micro-level sport diplomacy, occurring through routine, small-scale cross-cultural exchanges rather than large-scale public spectacle. Grix and Brannagan (2024) similarly

note that beyond mega-events, a growing number of "small," resource-constrained actors states, corporations, and non-state actors alike increasingly rely on smaller-scale sporting platforms to advance relational and reputational goals, a dynamic well suited to describing golf's diplomatic function.

Golf, in particular, has long been associated with business networking, trust-building, and informal negotiation. Empirical evidence continues to reinforce this association: Taminiau and Wiersma (2016) identify golf as a distinctive networking mechanism that facilitates career advancement and relationship-building beyond what conventional professional settings allow, while Izumi, Shigeoka, and Yagasaki (2024), in a large-scale study of Japanese corporate executives, demonstrate that golf functions as an informal networking tool strongly associated with the density and composition of CEOs' inter-firm business ties.

In this situation, the golf course serves as more than just a place to play golf for fun. Additionally, it offers a secure environment where people may improve their relationships, establish trust, and advance their social standing and reputation. Ceron-Anaya (2017) demonstrates how golfing bodies and practices become markers of differentiation through which economic capital is transformed into social and symbolic capital by utilising Bourdieusian theory in his research of Mexican golf clubs. Ceron-Anaya (2019) further illustrates in a related study how the spatial arrangement of private golf clubs actively creates and perpetuates class-based visibility and status hierarchies among their members. The Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, which was held in Tasmania and Australia, is an illustration of the practical use of sports diplomacy. In a laid-back and welcoming setting, the event

brought together business communities, public personalities, and significant people from Australia and Indonesia.

Participants got the chance to connect, engage, and form business partnerships through golf, hospitality events, and planned B2B networking sessions. In this instance, golf served as a means of fostering commercial ties, promoting cross-cultural interaction, and fortifying ties between individuals from both nations in addition to being a recreational sport. These many functions of sports are consistent with the results of Postlethwaite, Jenkin, and Sherry (2023), who draw attention to the "micro" dimension a less studied aspect of sports diplomacy. This is used to describe recurring, smaller-scale athletic events that are frequently planned by private organisations. In terms of preserving diplomatic ties, these events can support government-organized large athletic events rather than take their place. What Murray (2012) refers to as the hybridisation of diplomacy is reflected in Marsh Golf Leisure 2025's mix of locations, commercial operations, and cultural tourism. This implies that the distinction between government-to-government diplomacy (track-one) and people-to-people diplomacy (track-two) becomes less evident when official diplomatic objectives are accomplished through informal social interactions.

By analyzing Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a bilateral engagement platform, this research situates golf within the broader framework of soft power diplomacy and people-to-people diplomacy (Melissen, 2005). The event demonstrates how premium leisure activities can strengthen interpersonal trust, expand economic cooperation, and promote positive national images among participants who often occupy influential positions in

business or public life. This is consistent with more recent findings by Izumi, Shigeoka, and Yagasaki (2024), who show empirically that golf functions as a measurable informal networking channel among corporate executives, and with Grix and Brannagan's (2024) argument that soft-power-oriented sport strategies increasingly operate through smaller, relationally intensive platforms rather than solely through mega-events. Through this lens, sport diplomacy at Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 becomes not merely an auxiliary diplomatic tool but a strategic arena for symbolic production, relational networking, and economic-cultural negotiation one in which participants simultaneously perform economic partnership (echoing the trade and investment gains achieved through IA-CEPA) and cultivate the interpersonal trust that formal agreements alone cannot generate.

This study therefore contributes to the expanding scholarship on non-traditional diplomatic practices in Indonesia–Australia relations by integrating sport diplomacy theory with transnational business network analysis. In doing so, it highlights how leisure-based sport events function as sites of informal diplomacy that complement formal interstate cooperation mechanisms such as the IA-CEPA and the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2025–2029, extending the analytical reach of existing diplomatic frameworks beyond ministerial and treaty-level engagement into the realm of elite social practice.

Novelty this study is a review of the existing literature reveals a persistent bias toward mega-events and state-orchestrated programs as the primary units of analysis in sport diplomacy scholarship, from Grix and Brannagan's (2024) treatment of Olympic Games and World Cup hosting, to Creak and Trotier's (2024) analysis of the SEA Games as a

vehicle for ASEAN regionalism. Even Postlethwaite, Jenkin, and Sherry's (2023) integrative review, while acknowledging the existence of micro-level sport diplomacy, notes that empirical case studies at this scale remain comparatively scarce, particularly outside government-sponsored cultural-exchange programs. Parallel strands of research on golf and elite networking (Izumi et al., 2024; Ceron-Anaya, 2017, 2019) have, meanwhile, largely developed within business, sociology, and management literatures, with little cross-fertilization into international relations or diplomatic studies. This study addresses that gap by offering, to the researcher's knowledge, one of the first analyses to explicitly connect a premium, privately organized leisure-golf event to bilateral middle-power diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, specifically within the Indonesia–Australia relationship, a dyad whose diplomatic literature (McRae, 2017; Wesley, 2010) has focused overwhelmingly on security, trade, and formal treaty mechanisms rather than informal, elite-level sociability. By positioning Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 at the intersection of sport diplomacy theory and transnational business network analysis, this research offers a novel empirical and conceptual contribution: it demonstrates that niche, non-mass-audience leisure sport can function as a legitimate and analytically distinct diplomatic instrument, complementing rather than merely illustrating, formal economic and strategic partnership frameworks between the two countries.

The study's business positioning from a management standpoint, Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 is a premium leisure-and-business product; it must draw in paying participants, provide an experience worthy of the premium, establish beneficial connections between Indonesian and Australian counterparts, and maintain those connections long after the event is over. Its success is therefore judged not only by diplomatic symbolism but by

business criteria: participant recruitment and retention, the quality and relevance of business-to-business connections, the conversion of relationships into commercial opportunities, and the potential to turn the concept into a repeatable offering. This is consistent with research on event tourism, which treats planned events as strategic instruments for destination development and business activity (Getz, 2008), and with relationship marketing theory, which holds that trust and commitment underpin durable commercial exchange (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the Indonesia–Australia context this is especially relevant because IA-CEPA provides a favorable framework for trade, investment, and tourism that private actors must still activate through concrete business relationships.

A Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 had already taken place when this research began, so the study is a retrospective case study rather than a real-time evaluation. The 2025 edition was also a first, pilot-scale iteration: as discussed in Chapter IV, fewer than ten Indonesian participants attended against an initial projection of more than fifty. Reconstructing the event through the accounts of those who designed and attended it, and through the documentary record, makes it possible to identify what worked, what did not, and why. The reason for undertaking the study is explicitly forward-looking: to generate evidence that organizers, participating firms, and supporting agencies can use to improve the design, curation, and management of future editions so that the event becomes a more effective business and relationship-building platform.

From a strategic management perspective, Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 can be understood as an early-stage venture in the business events and sports tourism market. Its

organizers faced the core problems that any new service offering faces: defining a target market, designing a value proposition that justifies a premium price, mobilising partners, and deciding whether the concept can be repeated and scaled. The central management problem is therefore not whether golf can serve as a diplomatic symbol, but how a privately run organisation can design, market, and manage a cross-border leisure event so that it reliably produces business value for its participants and a sustainable return for its organisers. Framing the case this way places the study within the MBA domain of strategy, marketing, and relationship management, with sport diplomacy serving as the context in which these decisions are made.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How did Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 function as a platform for Indonesia–Australia bilateral business engagement?
2. In what ways did golf operate as an instrument of sport diplomacy and soft power that supports business relationship building?
3. How did the event facilitate people-to-people connections and transnational business networking?
4. What are the managerial and business implications of sport-based leisure diplomacy for Indonesia–Australia relations, and how can future editions of the event be improved?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the role of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a business engagement and sport diplomacy platform.
2. To examine golf as a medium of soft power and trust building that supports business relationships.
3. To explore the integration of business networking and cultural tourism within the event.
4. To assess the contribution of leisure-based diplomacy to Indonesia–Australia bilateral relations and to derive managerial recommendations for improving future editions of the event.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research enriches the literature on sport diplomacy by integrating analysis of transnational business networks within a premium leisure event context, an approach that remains underexplored in Indonesia–Australia studies. It also extends business network and relationship marketing research by examining how a leisure setting converts informal contact into the trust on which commercial relationships depend.

In terms of managerial contribution, the study is intended above all to be useful to those who manage and make decisions about events of this kind. Because the case is retrospective, its practical purpose is to turn the experience of the 2025 pilot into concrete guidance for future editions. The contribution is directed at four groups:

Event organizers and tour operators (such as Marsh Golf and its Australian-side operator) gain an account of the design choices that determine whether a premium leisure

event creates business value: participant curation and segmentation, the sequencing of leisure and structured networking, partnerships with institutions, and post-event relationship management. These are translated into specific recommendations and indicators in Chapter V.

Companies that send executives to such events gain a realistic view of the return they can expect (relationship capital, introductions, and long-term opportunity rather than immediate deals) and of how participation should be prepared for and followed up in order to capture it.

Trade, tourism, and diplomatic agencies gain evidence of how privately organized platforms complement formal frameworks such as IA-CEPA and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and of where light-touch support (for example, co-hosting B2B sessions, improving delegation quality, or destination promotion) adds the most value. Destination marketers in Australia and Tasmania gain insight into how premium sports tourism can be used to build awareness and demand among Indonesian business audiences.

Beyond its contribution to event organisers, the study offers a management lens on how small and medium-sized enterprises can enter international markets through relationship-based channels. Where formal market-entry tools such as trade missions or advertising are costly and impersonal, a curated leisure event offers a lower-cost way to build the trust that cross-border transactions require. The study therefore treats the 2025 pilot as a managerial learning case: what it shows about segmentation, partner selection, pricing against value, risk management when participation falls well below forecast, and the measurement of intangible returns such as trust and relationship capital. These lessons

are transferable, in principle, to other firms designing premium business-networking products.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

By examining how the event was planned, who attended, how networking occurred, and what activities continued after the event based on the experiences of the participants, this study looks at how the event helped people deepen relationships and make business connections. Since the primary focus is on the quality and sustainability of the business and diplomatic relationships the event generates and how future editions can be improved, it does not include a financial audit or a thorough cost-benefit analysis of the event or of the recommendations made by this study. There are a number of limitations to this study. First of all, it only concentrates on a single, modest event that was planned by a private business. Additionally, the study does not contrast this occasion with other sports diplomacy initiatives in the Asia-Pacific area. As a result, the results might not be entirely applicable to other nations, businesses, or sectors outside of the Indonesia–Australia setting.

This study does not involve direct observation because the event has already occurred; instead, it depends on the retrospective basis of participant memories and available papers. Participants might not recall every aspect precisely, though, and what they learn after the incident could affect their opinions. Additionally, the materials might primarily present the event from an official or promotional standpoint.

These restrictions are lessened but not entirely eliminated by data triangulation across informants from documents and interviews. Only three participants one of the event founders, the Australian operational partner, and a member of the business community were chosen for this study based on their particular responsibilities in the event. The survey does not, however, take into account the opinions and experiences of other delegates or stakeholders, which could restrict how accurately the results depict the event. The opinions of the organisers should primarily be interpreted as justifications for how and why the event was organised rather than as evidence of how each participant was impacted. Additionally, the benefits of this event may primarily benefit a smaller and more affluent set of individuals because playing golf frequently entails high expenses, restricted access, and gender disparities in many regions.

Indonesia and Australia's diplomatic and economic ties are still evolving, as is the event. As a result, this study makes use of the most recent scholarly studies and news articles that were accessible at the time of publication. Opportunities for commercial cooperation may potentially be impacted by future shifts in the two nations' relationship. It's still too soon to tell, though, whether the business ties made during the event will endure over time or how further iterations might strengthen existing ones.

1.6 Previous Studies

Sports can be a strategic weapon for enhancing international economic diplomacy, according to a number of earlier studies. Sports can be a strategic weapon for enhancing international economic diplomacy, according to a number of earlier studies. According to Murray (2012) and Grix & Brannagan (2016), sport diplomacy is the idea that sports

may be used as a means of fostering international relations, bolstering economic cooperation, and expanding cross-border business networks. Trade, investment, and business partnerships have all contributed to Indonesia and Australia's growing economic diplomacy. The 2019 signing of the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), which sought to increase chances for economic collaboration between the two nations, was a significant milestone in fortifying their economic ties. There is a lot of opportunity for cooperation in economic domains such international events, tourism, and sports thanks to this agreement (DFAT, 2020). Sports are seen as best practices and are frequently used as venues for economic diplomacy and business networking. International sporting events offer informal venues for business entities, politicians, and civil society to connect, which speeds up the formation of strategic alliances, according to Murray (2018). Due to its exclusivity and associations with the professional and executive classes, golf has long been utilised as a diplomatic and business tool (Pigman, 2010). Additionally, studies on sport event diplomacy indicate that recreational sporting events like golf competitions might foster soft power interactions between nations. According to Grix and Lee (2013), sporting events can improve a nation's reputation and encourage investment and economic cooperation through social interactions that are less formal than traditional diplomatic channels. By employing these strategies, events like Marsh Golf Leisure can be seen as a sports-based platform for economic diplomacy involving all Indonesian and Australian stakeholders. Business actors, governments, and professional communities may use this event as a strategic platform to expand their investment networks, improve bilateral contacts, and foster economic cooperation across a range of industries. In order

to analyse how Marsh Golf's activities might be used as a medium of economic diplomacy between Indonesia and Australia, this study is based on the concepts of sport diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and leisure networking.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organized into five chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the project:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, including the business context of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 and its retrospective nature, the research questions and objectives, the significance of the study (theoretical and managerial), the scope and limitations, a review of previous studies, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the theories and concepts that frame the study: sport diplomacy, soft power, people-to-people diplomacy, transnational business networks, and event-based relationship marketing and business development. It presents the conceptual framework used to analyze Marsh Golf Leisure 2025.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research approach and design, the data collection methods (documentation analysis, semi-structured interviews, and retrospective observation), the sampling strategy, the interview design and semi-structured interview guide, the data analysis techniques, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the interview findings, organized by informant and by theme, and relates them to the research questions and the conceptual framework.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the key findings, answers the research questions, and sets out the theoretical and managerial implications, including recommendations for improving future editions of Marsh Golf Leisure, as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sport Diplomacy

Sport diplomacy is the strategic utilization of sporting events, athletes and sport-related exchanges as instruments to influence diplomatic relations and to foster mutual understanding between countries. Sport diplomacy operates in informal, socially entrenched, and culturally relevant settings, whereas traditional diplomacy mostly uses formal discussions, treaties, and official state officials (Murray, 2012; Murray & Pigman, 2014). It is a component of a larger change in international relations, where public participation, symbolic contact, and non-state players are becoming increasingly important to diplomacy (Melissen, 2005). Joseph Nye's (2004) theory of soft power, which describes how nations can influence others by attractiveness rather than force or coercion, is strongly related to the idea of sports diplomacy. Because sports unite people, foster emotional bonds, have symbolic importance, and draw attention from people all over the world, they can be a useful tool for achieving this. Sports events and athletic exchange programs are frequently used by nations to portray a favourable image, show transparency, and develop reputational capital (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Sport diplomacy is driven by relational and affective dynamics.

Excitement, pride, and respect are among the common emotional feelings that arise from sporting interactions and aid in societal recognition. In traditional diplomatic settings, which are typically procedural and interest-based, it is challenging

to replicate these emotional aspects. Sport thus serves as a "relational lubricant," reducing the psychological gap between countries (Cha, 2009). This dynamic has historical precedents. Even in the face of ideological animosity, sport may play a significant role in fostering diplomatic relations, as demonstrated by the "Ping Pong Diplomacy" between the US and China in the 1970s (Xu, 2006). These instances demonstrate that, rather than taking the place of traditional diplomacy, sports diplomacy enhances it by fostering connections and more open communication. The fact that sports diplomacy promotes relationships through casual contacts rather than coercion or force is one of its key features. In actuality, strategic bargaining, power imbalances, and national interest calculations are frequently linked to conventional diplomacy (Berridge, 2015). Contrarily, sport diplomacy is predicated on shared norms and voluntary involvement.

Fair competition, respect for one another, and pleasant relationships are the ways that sports unite people. Sports are more than just a physical exercise; they represent a significant cultural component that reflects virtues like respect, discipline, teamwork, and the pursuit of perfection. In addition to competing, nations that engage in sport exchanges enact cultural narratives and national identities (Tomlinson & Young, 2006). As nations express who they are and how they want to be perceived, this performative aspect increases the diplomatic relevance of sport. According to academics, sport frequently offers a politically "neutral" or semi-neutral platform (Murray, 2012).

Sports may unite individuals from different nations and cultures despite their political differences, despite the fact that politics and sports are frequently intertwined and cannot be completely separated. People can interact, converse, and form bonds in a more laid-back setting through sports. As a result, there may be less conflict and more mutual understanding. Additionally, everyone agrees to abide by the explicit rules of sports, which makes relationships more comfortable and equitable. This is particularly helpful for nations where political disputes exist since sports may foster connections between people without requiring them to openly address delicate political matters. Sports foster shared experiences and feelings in addition to winning and losing. People can experience excitement, respect, and a sense of community whether they are competing as athletes or cheering as spectators. Despite cultural, ethnic, or political divides, these encounters can strengthen bonds between people. In addition to creating "imagined communities" at the national level, these shared sentiments also foster cross-border involvement at the transnational level (Anderson, 1983). With emotional resonance, sport's ability to promote empathy and mutual recognition grows. In the field of sport diplomacy, elite sports like golf have a unique place.

Golf, unlike mass spectator sports, is associated with exclusivity, status and business networking. Historically, golf courses have been informal arenas for negotiation, trust-building and relationship cultivation between political leaders and business elites (Stoddart, 1990). This phenomenon can be explained, with the help of the concept of social capital of Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Social capital is the network, the relationship, the trust that makes cooperation possible. Elite sporting contexts offer opportunities for the accumulation and distribution of social capital. A round of golf,

a game that often extends over several hours, offers ample opportunity for interpersonal interaction in a relaxed atmosphere, allowing actors to build camaraderie beyond the strict confines of formal surroundings. Golf, in this context, becomes a leisure activity and a diplomatic micro-space. Political, economic and social players talk informally, negotiate interests under the radar and build long-term relationships. This resonates with the wider idea of 'network diplomacy' where power is derived from relational links rather than hierarchical power (Hocking, 2006). Sport diplomacy can be analytically defined as:

1. A soft power strategy that leverages attraction and symbolism.
2. A relational mechanism that strengthens people-to-people connections.
3. A semi-neutral platform that mitigates political tension.
4. A site of social capital production, particularly in elite sports contexts.

Thus, sport diplomacy does not merely serve as entertainment or cultural exchange; it operates as a structured arena of informal diplomacy where identity, trust, and economic interests intersect. Especially in bilateral contexts characterized by fluctuating political dynamics, sport-based engagement can provide continuity and stability through sustained interpersonal networks.

2.2 Soft Power Theory

The present study is informed by Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s theory of soft power, which has radically changed the way influence is perceived in international relations. Soft

power (Nye, 1990, 2004) is the ability of a country to get what it wants through attraction rather than coercive (hard) power or payment (economic inducement).

Hard power is the use of economic sanctions, military force, or other forms of coercion to get people to do something. Soft power, on the other hand, concentrates on persuasion, shared values, culture, trust, and the legitimacy of institutions. Soft power encourages people to voluntarily support or accept particular decisions rather than pressuring them to take action. This distinction is significant because it creates an analytical space for non-military, non-economic tools of statecraft like culture, education, and sport by reconfiguring influence as something that can be developed through admiration and example rather than only through threat or inducement. Nye (2004) recognised three sources of soft power. The first is culture, when it appeals to others; the second is political ideals, when they are consistently upheld both domestically and internationally; and the third is foreign policy, when it is regarded by others as morally sound and legitimate.

Later developments of the theory, including Nye's own later work (2019), maintain this threefold schema, while highlighting the fact that soft power resources are, after all, "intangible," that is to say that the diplomatic value of these resources depends not so much on their intrinsic qualities as on how well they are packaged and communicated to foreign publics rather than governments alone. This qualification is important to the present study, in that it suggests that the diplomatic value of an event is not automatic, but must be actively constructed through narrative, hospitality and relationship-building, a point that later scholars have taken up in order to caution

against treating soft power as an inevitable by-product of any international sporting or cultural occasion.

Culture is particularly important in Nye's framework because it influences perceptions of a nation by the international community, often more enduring than official diplomatic communiqués. States project identity and build admiration through cultural expressions such as art, education, media, sport and international events (Melissen, 2005). When the culture of a country is viewed positively by other societies, they are more likely to voluntarily conform to its preferences and cooperate on matters of mutual interest. Sport has a special place in this cultural repository, for it melds spectacle, common emotion, and cross-cultural accessibility in ways few other cultural forms can. It is an especially potent, if underexamined, mode of soft power projection.

Soft power, as formulated by Nye, functions through what he calls the "power of attraction." Attraction breeds identification and imitation, not resistance. Coercion breeds compliance through fear. Attraction breeds willingness, trust and voluntary cooperation. Nye goes on to explain that soft power resources are typically mobilized through three interrelated dimensions of public diplomacy: daily engagement with media and opinion-makers; strategic communication in the form of a continuous nation-branding campaign; and, most germane to this research, the cultivation of lasting relationships with key individuals over time through such vehicles as scholarships, exchanges, training programs, seminars, and conferences. Theoretically, this third dimension is important to the analysis of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 because it specifies the exact sort of sustained, personal, elite-level relationship-building that a

golf leisure event is structurally designed to generate. This situates the event within an established, theorised channel of soft power practice rather than viewing it as an ad hoc or peripheral diplomatic activity.

Recent scholarship has considerably expanded the application of soft power theory to sport, offering both conceptual refinement and empirical precedent for the present study. Grix and Brannagan's work on the mechanisms that underpin states' soft power strategies through sports events shows that the diplomatic payoff of a sporting occasion is neither automatic nor guaranteed; it depends on how deliberately a state or organizing body manages narrative, image and relational access around the event. More recent case-based scholarship has applied this logic to particular mega-events, demonstrating how host states engage in extensive cultural diplomacy efforts and the purposeful projection of national identity to alter external perceptions, positively re-framing pre-event skepticism into post-event goodwill among neighboring or partner states. Likewise, complementary work on sport-based nation branding similarly constructs global sporting events as strategic assets: rather than taking for granted that hosting or participating in a sporting occasion necessarily produces influence, this literature points to strategic intent, audience engagement and the cultivation of familiarity and appreciation as the actual mechanisms through which soft power conditions are created.

It is also helpful in this theoretical discussion to distinguish soft power from the related, but analytically separate, concept of nation branding. Soft power is a state's ability to get others to want what it wants. It is not about coercion; it is about culture,

values and policies. In more specific terms, nation branding is about strategically managing and communicating a country's image, so as to influence how it is perceived internationally. The two concepts are often used interchangeably in the sport diplomacy literature, as a well-branded sporting event can act as one of the concrete vehicles through which broader soft power is accumulated, but they should not be treated as synonymous: branding is a communicative technique, whereas soft power is the relational outcome that such techniques are ultimately intended to produce.

Nye also introduced the concept of "smart power" in his later writings: the ability to combine hard and soft power into a coherent strategy in which the two complement rather than undermine each other.

This study treats Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 primarily as an instrument of soft power, but the concept of smart power is a useful reminder that soft power initiatives such as elite sporting and leisure diplomacy rarely operate in isolation; they are typically embedded within, and mutually reinforcing of, broader strategic and economic partnerships between states, such as the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that currently structure the formal architecture of Indonesia–Australia relations.

These theoretical developments together justify the application of Nye's soft power framework to the analysis of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. In Nye's sense, the event can be regarded as an intangible power resource: a cultural and recreational occasion whose diplomatic value is not based on coercive capacity or financial inducement, but on its ability to generate attraction, trust and voluntary alignment among Indonesian

and Australian participants. The study views the informal, leisure-based interactions on the golf course as a concrete site where soft power is not only theorized but actively practiced, in line with the third dimension of public diplomacy that Nye identifies, which is the deliberate cultivation of long-term relationships among key individuals. It provides an empirical extension of soft power theory into a field that remains relatively unexplored in the existing literature on sport diplomacy between Indonesia and Australia.

2.2.1 Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

Soft power is also closely associated with the notion of public diplomacy, which is the effort of governments and non-state actors to directly influence foreign publics rather than through traditional government-to-government channels (Cull, 2009). Public diplomacy, by contrast, is not confined to elite official circles as traditional diplomacy generally is; it reaches out to civil society, business actors, educational institutions and cultural communities, addressing them as legitimate audiences and, increasingly, as active participants in the diplomatic process.

Today in a globalized world communication flows rapidly through transnational networks, for the most part outside the formal control of the state. This has undermined the traditional monopoly that states once had over diplomatic interaction, but it has simultaneously increased the strategic importance of image, narrative and reputation (Leonard, 2002). In this context, the capacity of a country to influence world opinion has come to be a more and more important factor of its total diplomatic power,

sometimes competing with the power of negotiation and treaty-making which was once paramount.

In such a landscape, international events, especially cultural and sports events, act as strategic showcases for the projection of soft power. They allow states to showcase to a global audience national competence, stability, hospitality and novelty (Grix & Brannagan, 2016). These events should therefore not be understood as spectacles or mere entertainment, but as performative acts of nation branding through which symbolic meanings about a country's identity, values and global role are actively constructed and communicated.

2.2.2 Symbolism and Social Capital in Soft Power

In addition to its communicative purpose, soft power also works symbolically, communicating values and aspirations through shared experience, not just explicit messaging. In this regard, the concept of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) is particularly relevant. Prestige, recognition and honor are immaterial resources that can be accumulated and then converted, like economic or cultural capital, into higher legitimacy and power.

Elite leisure activities such as golf are rife with symbolic associations of professionalism, exclusivity, trust and long-term partnership. These associations feed into what Nye (2011) later called "smart power," the strategic combination of hard and soft power instruments into a coherent and mutually reinforcing approach to influence. Importantly, even if no formal agreement is signed during the event itself, the symbolic

context created by prestigious, exclusive gatherings can lay the relational groundwork that nurtures future cooperation.

And attraction, moreover, often works by building social capital rather than by direct persuasion. Trust-based relationships created in informal settings reduce the transaction costs of political and economic cooperation (Putnam, 2000). People who build networks of shared experience, such as shared participation in a leisure activity, develop a degree of interpersonal familiarity that can then be turned into more formalized institutional cooperation, whether in business, diplomacy or bilateral policy engagement.

2.2.3 Soft Power in the Context of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025

Golf is more than a recreational activity in the context of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. It acts as a symbolic device of attraction, suggesting lifestyle refinement and status on the one hand, and elite networking based on mutual trust and the search for long-term partnership on the other. Golf has historically been associated with business and political elites, offering a relaxed yet strategically productive setting for extended interaction, a dynamic empirically confirmed by Izumi, Shigeoka, and Yagasaki (2024) in their study of corporate executives, which found that shared participation in golf is measurably linked to the density and composition of inter-firm business ties. Ceron-Anaya (2017, 2019) further argues that the golf course functions as a site for the conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital and prestige, thus reinforcing distinctions of status among participants even when it appears to be a purely leisure setting. This framing is consistent with Nye's continuing insistence, reiterated in his

more recent work (Nye, 2021), that attraction is most effective when embedded in lived cultural experience, rather than delivered through explicit political messaging – a claim that later scholars have nuanced by emphasizing that such attraction is contingent on perceived authenticity and credibility rather than orchestrated spectacle (Lukes, 2020; Zaharna, 2022).

The event is a cultural showcase (hospitality, landscape and lifestyle values), an economic showcase (tourism infrastructure, investment opportunities and premium service industries) and a reputational platform (reinforcing perceptions of Indonesia and Australia as stable, cooperative and globally engaged partners). This triple function reflects the lasting resilience of cultural diplomacy in an increasingly fragmented international order, as Melissen (2020) puts it, precisely because it establishes people-to-people connections that can transcend episodic political friction a dynamic directly relevant to the historical fluctuations that have periodically characterized Indonesia–Australia relations (McRae, 2017; Wesley, 2010). Similarly, Kobierecka and Kobierecki (2024) show in their study of embassy-related cultural events that small-scale, non-state-organized meetings can be useful instruments of public diplomacy and nation branding if they offer direct, positive interpersonal experiences to participants. El-Dabt, AlReshaid, Park, AlBuloushi and Al-Enzi (2025) similarly show that strategically managed sport-linked events are conducive to sustainable nation branding, but not so much through the mass broadcast reach, but rather through the quality and repetition of the experiential encounters they create.

Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 combines sport, business networking and tourism to promote bilateral perception and people-to-people engagement. It invites participation, not influence, an invitation-based logic that is the essence of soft power as originally conceived by Nye, and which Grix and Brannagan (2024) argue has become an increasingly deliberate strategy among states and non-state actors seeking influence without coercion. Four interrelated dynamics emerge from applying the soft power theory to Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. First, the event acts as a non-coercive diplomatic tool, as Postlethwaite, Jenkin and Sherry (2023) argue that micro-level sport diplomacy is voluntary, based on relationships, and distinct from state-scripted mega-events. Second, attraction is created through a shared leisure experience and symbolic prestige, rather than overt persuasion. Third, informal interaction develops the type of interpersonal trust that may over time help maintain and reinforce long-term bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, alongside formal frameworks such as IA-CEPA. Fourth, the cultural and economic self-presentation embedded in the event enhances both countries' international image among an influential, high-networked audience.

Thus, soft power theory, interpreted through contemporary refinements that stress authenticity, relationality, and micro-scale interaction (Nye, 2021; Zaharna, 2022; Postlethwaite et al., 2023), offers a strong analytical lens for understanding how leisure-based sporting events facilitate diplomatic engagement beyond formal negotiations, thereby positioning Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a compact but theoretically rich case of contemporary Indonesia–Australia sport diplomacy.

2.3 People-to-People Diplomacy

Direct communication between residents of other nations that fosters mutual understanding, trust, and long-term collaboration outside of official governmental procedures is referred to as "people-to-people diplomacy." People-to-people diplomacy functions at the society level and prioritizes interpersonal involvement, cultural exchange, and social connection, in contrast to traditional diplomacy, which is carried out by official representatives through structured negotiations (Melissen, 2005).

The development of public diplomacy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is intimately related to the rise of people-to-people diplomacy. By acknowledging that foreign publics, not only foreign governments, are vital in determining international relations, people diplomacy broadened the scope of international participation (Cull, 2009). Governments increasingly acknowledged that sustainable bilateral ties depend on public perception, community trust, and grassroots engagement.

Melissen (2005) contends that contemporary diplomacy is characterized by multi-layered interaction involving state and non-state entities. In this framework, civil society organizations, educational institutions, business communities, diaspora groups, and cultural networks become active participants in international involvement. People-to-people diplomacy is built in the assumption that:

1. Long-term peace and cooperation are built on social trust.
2. Interpersonal familiarity reduces stereotypes and suspicion.

3. Cultural exchange fosters empathy and shared identity.

These ideas are consistent with the more general liberal internationalist viewpoint, which stresses collaboration via communication and interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The success of people-to-people diplomacy can be understood through the lens of social capital theory. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as networks, norms, and trust that enable people to operate together more successfully. Trust-based relationships developed at the societal level can indirectly boost interstate ties by reducing uncertainty and fostering cooperation.

Bourdieu (1986) similarly conceptualizes social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources associated to possession of a persistent network of relationships. Citizens who participate in cross-border interactions through business, tourism, education, or athletics build up relational capital that could eventually lead to diplomatic or economic cooperation. Trust is particularly vital in bilateral environments where political difficulties may erupt occasionally. Established interpersonal networks can keep lines of communication open and avoid total relationship collapse, even in situations where formal diplomatic contacts are strained.

The casual nature of people-to-people diplomacy is one of its unique characteristics. Unlike formal diplomatic summits, which are highly planned and agenda-driven, people-to-people contacts occur in relaxed and socially entrenched situations. This informality encourages relationships to develop spontaneously rather than strategically. Leonard (2002) argues that effective public diplomacy requires discussion rather than one-way communications. Informal connection facilitates

reciprocal listening, shared experience, and co-creation of meaning. This dialogic feature makes people-to-people diplomacy more sustainable than top-down diplomatic messaging. In this way, organic connection removes hierarchical barriers and fosters equality amongst individuals. Shared experiences such as educational exchange programs, cultural festivals, or sporting events establish emotional attachments that transcend political rhetoric.

Sport-based leisure events provide a particularly fertile atmosphere for people-to-people diplomacy. Cooperation, shared rules, and respect for one another are all naturally fostered by sport (Murray, 2012). Unlike political forums, sporting contexts encourage participation and enjoyment, producing a depoliticized interaction area. Sport contributes to people-to-people diplomacy in numerous ways:

1. Shared Experience: Participants take part in a shared activity under general guidelines.
2. Emotional Engagement: Sports foster excitement, unity, and a sense of shared identity.
3. Extended Interaction Time: Participants spend several hours together, especially in games like golf, which facilitates meaningful discourse.
4. Symbolic Neutrality: According to Cha (2009), sport offers a semi-neutral forum where political disagreements are momentarily put on hold.

Elite leisure activities such as golf increase these relational characteristics. Because golf involves small groups and continuous engagement, it creates deeper interpersonal acquaintance compared to large-scale spectator events. The golf course becomes an

informal diplomatic micro-space where business leaders, policymakers, and social elites engage beyond formal procedure.

People-to-people diplomacy serves as a stabilizing layer in bilateral ties that are marked by sporadic friction, like those between Indonesia and Australia. According to McRae (2017), social and educational interactions have traditionally been crucial for sustaining participation even in times of political unrest. When citizens develop long-term social networks, they contribute to what Keohane and Nye (1977) call as "complex interdependence." Under conditions of interdependence, various channels of contact governmental and non-governmental reduce the chance of conflict escalation. Sport-based leisure activities therefore support both the structural robustness of bilateral partnerships and immediate networking benefits. Instead of limiting diplomacy to formal channels, they incorporate it into regular social interactions. Analytically speaking, people-to-people diplomacy can be defined as:

1. A relational infrastructure underpinning formal diplomacy.
2. A mechanism for trust-building and stereotype reduction.
3. A generator of social capital that supports economic and political cooperation.
4. A stabilizing factor in fluctuating bilateral relations.

In the context of golf diplomacy, people-to-people interaction operates through lengthy, informal engagement among elite actors. These encounters create interpersonal trust, which may later transfer into institutional or economic collaboration. Sport-based leisure activities are therefore relational platforms with long-term diplomatic ramifications rather than just recreational get-togethers.

2.4 Transnational Business Networks

Cross-border relational structures created by corporate players, entrepreneurs, investors, and economic elites that promote information flow, strategic cooperation, and economic exchange across national borders are referred to as transnational business networks. In the age of globalization, networks rather than only hierarchical state agreements are increasingly used for economic engagement (Castells, 1996; Slaughter, 2004). These networks act as informal infrastructures of global capitalism, uniting persons and institutions across political jurisdictions. From the standpoint of global political economy, relational connection is a key component of economic power. Manuel Castells (1996) describes the present world as a "network society," where flows of capital, knowledge, and influence move through interconnected nodes. Influence in this system is dependent on both access to strategic networks and material resources.

Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004) further contends that governance increasingly occurs through transgovernmental and transnational networks that connect officials, regulators, and commercial actors across borders. These network structures blur the boundaries between public and private spheres, producing hybrid venues where diplomacy and commercial activity intersect. Transnational corporate networks frequently supplement formal economic agreements in bilateral interactions. Even when national negotiations slow, private-sector connections can preserve economic

participation. Thus, networking spaces become crucial for ensuring continuity in international cooperation.

The emergence of multinational corporate networks can be analytically studied through social capital theory. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes social capital as resources contained in persistent networks of interactions. Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000) highlight that trust, norms, and reciprocity increase cooperation and lower transaction costs. Elite networking locations, such as corporate forums, trade expos, and recreational sport events, serve as means for acquiring and exchanging social capital. Trust-based relationships typically predate formal contracts. Personal familiarity can be just as important as institutional safeguards in high-value economic areas.

In the past, golf in particular has served as a means of elite networking. Stoddart (1990) contends that golf emerged as a socially exclusive sport linked with economic elites and political leaders. The extended duration of golf games, often four to five hours, enables sustained face-to-face engagement, allowing participants to build rapport, exchange information, and gently negotiate interests. Unlike conventional boardroom meetings, golf courses offer casual yet regulated venues. These are places where political signaling, cultural interchange, and economic interests coexist. Sport-based networking events combine:

1. Cultural symbolism (national identity, lifestyle representation)
2. Economic interaction (investment exploration, partnership discussion)
3. Informal diplomacy (relationship building across borders)

Murray and Pigman (2014) stress that sport diplomacy sometimes overlaps with economic diplomacy, particularly when tournaments attract business elites and corporate sponsors. Increasingly, informal engagement techniques are incorporated into economic diplomacy, which is generally viewed as the employment of diplomatic tools to encourage trade and investment (Berridge, 2015). In this perspective, golf diplomacy does not operate exclusively as cultural diplomacy nor solely as economic diplomacy; it functions as a hybrid mechanism that mixes symbolic attractiveness with material interest. The golf course becomes a transnational contact zone where identities are performed and economic relationships are cultivated simultaneously.

Transnational business networks rely heavily on trust, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Uncertainty pertaining to political stability, legal systems, and cultural differences is frequently present in international economic cooperation. By fostering interpersonal familiarity, informal networking activities help reduce such uncertainties. Granovetter's (1985) concept of embeddedness indicates that economic behavior is embedded inside social interactions. Transactions are influenced by continuous relationships rather than being solely logical computations. When actors participate consistently in leisure-based networking situations, they establish mutual expectations and relational accountability. In bilateral contexts such as Indonesia–Australia relations, elite networking gatherings may:

1. Strengthen investment confidence
2. Encourage knowledge exchange
3. Facilitate joint ventures

4. Promote tourism and service industries

In the case of *Marsh Golf Leisure 2025*, the event can be conceptualized as a *transnational networking hub*. Rather than functioning solely as a recreational tournament, the event created a structured environment for cross-border elite interaction. From a theoretical perspective, transnational business networks within golf diplomacy can be understood as:

1. Network-based extensions of economic diplomacy
2. Sites of social capital production
3. Informal platforms for trust-building and embedded economic exchange
4. Hybrid arenas merging symbolic soft power with material economic interests

Thus, golf diplomacy represents a convergence of global political economy and public diplomacy dynamics. It reinforces the idea that contemporary international relations are increasingly structured by relational networks rather than solely by formal agreements.

2.5 Business Perspective: Event-Based Relationship Marketing and Business Development

Because this study is conducted from a management and business perspective, the diplomatic concepts reviewed above are complemented by concepts from event management and relationship marketing that explain how an event such as Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 creates value for the businesses involved. Event tourism research treats planned events as strategic tools that attract visitors, build destination image, and

generate economic activity (Getz, 2008). Premium sporting events in particular combine a core product (here, golf) with travel, hospitality, and networking elements, and their commercial viability depends on attracting the right participants and delivering an experience that justifies a premium price. Participant recruitment, segmentation, and experience design are therefore central managerial concerns rather than peripheral ones.

Relationship marketing theory provides the second building block. Morgan and Hunt (1994), in their commitment–trust theory, argue that trust and relationship commitment are the key mediating variables that turn cooperative exchange into durable, mutually beneficial relationships. In business-to-business settings such relationships typically precede, rather than follow, transactions: firms prefer to deal with counterparts they know and trust, particularly across borders where legal systems, business cultures, and market conditions differ. The network perspectives reviewed in Section 2.4 (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997) reinforce this point by showing that the productivity of business ties depends on their embeddedness in social relationships and on the composition of the network. Read together, these literatures imply that a leisure event creates business value to the extent that it (a) brings the right counterparts together, (b) gives them enough unhurried, informal contact to build trust, and (c) is followed by activities that convert initial familiarity into continuing commercial exchange.

Two further management concepts help explain why the event's outcomes depended on design choices rather than on golf itself. First, the experience economy

perspective (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) holds that firms can differentiate and charge a premium by staging memorable, carefully designed experiences rather than selling goods or services alone; in this case, the golf rounds, hospitality, and cultural tourism form the experience, and the B2B sessions form the business outcome that justifies the price. Second, stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) draws attention to the range of actors whose interests an event must align: paying participants, the founder, the Australian operating partner, consulates, state tourism and trade agencies, and potential sponsors. Read through these two concepts, the shortfall in Indonesian participation (fewer than ten against a projection of around fifty) is a management finding about market sizing, targeting, and stakeholder engagement, rather than only a limitation of the pilot.

From a business-development standpoint, Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 can therefore be analyzed along three managerial dimensions: the value proposition offered to participants (golf, destination discovery, hospitality, and access to a curated business community); the networking architecture of the program (the balance between structured B2B sessions and unstructured leisure time); and the post-event relationship management that determines whether contacts become partnerships. These dimensions provide the business lens through which the interview data in Chapter IV are interpreted and on which the managerial implications in Chapter V are built. The lens is consistent with the view of economic and commercial diplomacy as the use of diplomatic tools to promote trade, investment, and business (Berridge, 2015), but it shifts the analytical focus from state objectives to the decisions of the firms, organizers, and agencies that actually design and run such initiatives.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualizes Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a convergence platform consisting of:

1. Sport as symbolic diplomacy
2. Leisure as informal engagement space
3. Business networking as economic diplomacy
4. Cultural tourism as image-building strategy

These elements collectively produce a model of premium leisure-based sport diplomacy within Indonesia–Australia relations.

Because the study is positioned within business and management, each component is also read for its business function. Sport as symbolic diplomacy corresponds to the event's value proposition and premium positioning; leisure as informal engagement space corresponds to the unstructured relationship-building time of the program; business networking as economic diplomacy corresponds to structured B2B matching and follow-up; and cultural tourism as image-building strategy corresponds to destination promotion and market development for Australia and Tasmania. This business reading is applied to the interview data in Chapter IV and developed into managerial implications in Chapter V.

Table 2.1 Conceptual Framework of Premium Leisure-Based Sport Diplomacy

Main Components	Conceptual Role	Diplomatic Dimension	Output Strategy
Sport as Symbolic Diplomacy	Golf as a symbol of prestige, trust, and exclusivity	Soft Power & Symbolic Power	Strengthening an elite, professional, and credible image
Leisure as Informal Egagement Space	A non-formal interaction space among cross-border actors	People-to-People Diplomacy	The development of interpersonal closeness and mutual understanding
Business Networking as Economic Diplomacy	Golf as a platform networking and deal-making	Economic & Commercial Diplomacy	Collaboration in investment, trade, and business partnerships

The table shows three interconnected aspects that collectively demonstrate the complex character of golf as a diplomatic instrument, progressing from the symbolic to the interpersonal to the transactional.

The first is to promote golf not as a game but as a symbol of prestige, trust and exclusivity. It belongs to the larger theoretical context of soft and symbolic power in world politics. Nye (2004) describes soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment,” and states that a country’s soft power is based on its resources of culture, values and policies (Nye, 2008). In this

context, sport occupies a privileged place. The scholars of sports diplomacy state that the attractiveness of cinema, music, culture, language or sport is part of this diplomacy of influence, and sport is one of the rare domains in geopolitics where power is not rejected, but most often admired Golf, in particular, carries this symbolic weight because of its association with exclusivity and elite access: contemporary commentary on the sport notes that players who lack the "history or prestige" that matter in that world can struggle for legitimacy even with financial backing given the importance of credibility, sponsorship, and history in the golf world (Schmitt, 2023). Thus golf is a skilfully choreographed performance of a professional and reliable national or individual image, which supports the symbolic-power dimension of the framework.

The second element re-imagines golf as an informal space for cross-border actors to build intimacy beyond formal etiquette. That matches the notion of people-to-people diplomacy, which is focused on citizen-to-citizen relations happening outside of government contexts. People-to-people diplomacy refers to the informal communication and interaction between people from different countries, to establish mutual understanding and relationships (Fiveable, n.d.). A prime example of this phenomenon is often referred to as golf diplomacy. Analysts have described this as the art of the game in which informal links, rapport, and communication between global leaders, communities, and organizations are established (Belton, 2025). This mechanism is exemplified in the story of a retired U.S. ambassador in Cambodia, who accepted the prime minister's invitation to join him on a series of Sunday outings for golf and became a good friend of the prime minister, with the slow process of exchanging diplomatic notes often hindering the resolution of pressing issues (Ray,

2025). The historical touchstone often mentioned in this regard is the 1957 golf game between U.S. President Eisenhower and Japanese Prime Minister Kishi, which experts have characterized as a "triumph of diplomacy" and the foundation for a strong U.S.-Japan relationship (Vu, 2025). These incidents illustrate how recreational settings reduce the level of formality to facilitate mutual understanding and trust between people, not organizations.

The third element places golf in the context of economic and commercial diplomacy, viewing it as a space for networking and deal-making. According to Rana (2007), economic diplomacy is broadly defined as: "the process by which states engage with the outside world with the objective of maximising their national gain in all the fields of activities like trade, investment and other economically beneficial exchanges in which they have comparative advantage. At the commercial level this diplomacy is called diplomacy that focuses on developing business between two countries, which yields commercial gains in the form of trade and inward and outward investment through the promotion of business and entrepreneurship including networking, capacity building, intelligence, image campaigns and support.

That's what the golf course does. In many countries golf has long been seen as an important business networking activity that helps to build relationships and mutual understanding between people and nations. Recent reports indicate that the diplomatic engagement has been accompanied by a significant expansion of bilateral economic ties, including major aircraft purchase deals (Vu, 2025). Golf is presented as a soft

infrastructure of economic diplomacy, where informal links between politicians, businessmen and executives can translate into actual trade and investment cooperation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the function of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a sport diplomacy platform in the Indonesian-Australian relations. Because the study focuses on meanings, perceptions, symbolic representations, and relational dynamics that occur between Indonesian and Australian participants dimensions that cannot be sufficiently captured through statistical measurement of causal relationships the choice of a qualitative approach is intentional rather than accidental. Qualitative research is a technique that prioritises natural settings, participant views, and inductive analysis over the testing of preconceived hypotheses in order to explore and comprehend the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. (Creswell, 2013). An approach like this is particularly suitable for a phenomenon like Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, where the diplomatic significance of the event must be reconstructed from the language, behaviour, and interpretations of those who took part, rather than being evident from the official statements themselves.

According to Creswell's methodological guidelines, the study used a qualitative descriptive design in order to give a thorough account of the event in the participants' everyday language without sacrificing analytical depth. Crucially, the study views Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a text to be evaluated rather than an item to be recorded. The analysis is based on four interpretive issues: how golf is viewed as a cultural and

economic showcase at the same time; the nature of elite networking and informal trust negotiation; the interpersonal interaction between Indonesian and Australian participants; and the symbolic significance attributed to golf as a diplomatic channel. Later methodological literature supports this emphasis on depth of interpretation: Yin (2018) points out that case-based inquiry into modern phenomena is particularly appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its real-world context are difficult to discern, which is precisely the case in an event where sport, business, and diplomacy are purposefully interwoven. The justification for a qualitative approach is further supported by the larger body of literature on sport diplomacy. Because sport diplomacy is done through informal participation, symbolic gestures, and relationship building rather than regulated institutional procedure, it is challenging to adequately measure its influence using quantitative markers. However, qualitative analysis enables the researcher to evaluate the participants' subjective experiences of the event and how shared meaning is created in a recreational context that appears to be more recreational than diplomatic. According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017), this is in line with the current methodological consensus that theme and interpretative approaches are best suited for illuminating how participants perceive complicated, socially embedded experiences. They argue that generating sensitive, perceptive, and reliable conclusions from qualitative data requires thorough thematic analysis.

Within the wider literature on sport diplomacy, the rationale of a qualitative design makes even more sense. The impact of sport diplomacy is difficult to fully quantify through quantitative indicators, as it is practiced through informal

engagement, symbolic gesture, and relationship building rather than codified institutional procedure. Qualitative analysis, however, allows the researcher to interpret how the participants subjectively experience the event and how shared meaning is constructed within a leisure setting that is, on the surface, recreational rather than diplomatic. This is consistent with the current methodological consensus that thematic and interpretive approaches are most appropriate for revealing the ways in which participants make meaning of complex, socially embedded experiences (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). They contend that rigorous thematic analysis is essential to producing sensitive, insightful, and trustworthy findings from qualitative data.

Creswell (2013) also indicates that qualitative inquiry is based on an interpretivist paradigm, where reality is viewed as socially constructed rather than as an objective given. This epistemological position is directly relevant to the conceptualization of diplomacy in the present study. This research approaches diplomacy as a socially embedded practice, shaped by interaction, narrative and perception on the ground rather than as a formal, institutional process taking place in embassies, treaties and ministerial statements. In this framing, the golf course itself becomes an interactional space, rather than a neutral backdrop: a context in which cultural identity is performed, trust is negotiated informally between strangers and acquaintances, economic interests are explored subtly rather than declared outright, and diplomatic symbolism is enacted through gesture, hospitality, and shared leisure. In this sense, understanding Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 is one of contextual

interpretation rather than statistical generalisation, a methodological commitment that permeates the rest of this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

The research is conducted using a single case study design and is limited to Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as an example of bilateral sport diplomacy practice. The case study approach is chosen because it is most suited to offering a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of a limited, real-life event, particularly one where several forms of involvement (sporting, economic, cultural, and diplomatic) come together in a single event. Yin (2018) states that case study research is particularly helpful when the researcher has little or no control over the behavioral events being researched and the study aims to address "how" and "why" questions concerning a modern occurrence in its real-world context. Both requirements are met by the research, which asks how golf serves as a medium for diplomatic meaning-making and why elite networking in a recreational setting results in the specific types of trust and economic exploration seen. However, the researcher has no control over how the event is actually run. Because the study is focused on a single, well-documented case rather than a comparable sample, it can maintain the contextual density necessary for a qualitative, interpretivist approach, yielding analytical insight rather than statistical generalization from the case (Yin, 2018).

The case is of a retrospective character. Since Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 had already ended when this study started, the researcher was unable to participate in the event or see it happen. As a result, the study reconstructs the event after the fact using the testimonies of those who planned, executed, and witnessed it as well as the

documentation it left behind. Since the 2025 edition was a first, pilot-scale iteration, a retrospective design is appropriate in this case for practical reasons. With the benefit of hindsight, its design, outcomes, and shortcomings may be assessed after the fact, enabling the lessons learnt to be applied to subsequent iterations. The triangulation technique outlined in Section 3.7 and acknowledged in Section 1.5 addresses the design's stated weaknesses, which include recall bias, hindsight bias, and reliance on existing records.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Three complementary techniques were used to collect the data for this study in order to allow for triangulation and to offset the drawbacks of any one source. Interviews are the main source of information since Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 is a retrospective case; contextual and supporting evidence is provided by documentation analysis and retrospective observation. The first approach is documentation analysis, which includes official event materials (itineraries, programs, and invitations), promotional publications produced by the organizers, media coverage of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 in Indonesian and Australian media, and institutional reports related to the event published by governmental or commercial organizations. Documentary materials offer a crucial foundation for comprehending how the event was framed and publicly depicted, even as the research goes beyond official framing to assess the underlying diplomatic and business logic of the event.

Semi-structured interviews with purposefully chosen Indonesian and Australian informants, such as the event organizers and a business-community participant, constitute the second method. Because they provide access to participants'

subjective interpretations, motivations, and experiences that documentary sources alone cannot, interviews are a crucial part of qualitative case study research. Section 3.5 provides more details on the interview design.

The third method is retrospective observation. Direct observation, whether participant or non-participant, was not possible because the event had already taken place before the research began. Observation is therefore adapted to the retrospective nature of the study: the researcher systematically examines the observable traces of the event, such as photographs and videos, event programs and itineraries, social media posts, and press coverage, in order to reconstruct the setting, the sequence of activities, and the patterns of interaction among participants (for example, the structure of the Consulate General networking evening, the golf rounds, and the shared meals and tourism activities). Notes drawn from this material are not treated as independent evidence of what participants felt or intended. They are used to cross-check and contextualize the accounts given in the interviews, consistent with the flexible, multi-method logic that Yin (2018) identifies as a defining strength of case study inquiry.

3.4 Sampling and Informants

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which informants are deliberately selected based on their possession of specific knowledge, roles, or lived experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, rather than on statistical representativeness (Creswell, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Because this research is concerned with the symbolic, relational, and interpretive dimensions of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as understood by those who actually participated in it, a probability-based sampling frame is neither feasible nor appropriate. Instead,

informants are chosen precisely because their position within the event grants them the depth of insight required to address the four research questions guiding this study, namely how the event functioned as a bilateral engagement platform, how golf operated as an instrument of soft power, how it facilitated people-to-people and business networking, and what implications it carries for Indonesia–Australia relations.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured in-depth method with three informants: (1) Jola Sharon Marsh, a golfer, environmental activist, and founder of Marsh Golf, who acted as the event's founder and lead organizer; (2) Yohana Hardjadinata, a Strategic Business Development Director, who was involved in organizing and bringing the Indonesian delegation to the event; and (3) Peter Craven, owner of Par1 Golfing Tours and the Australian-side operational partner for the event, who has spent nearly 30 years living and working in Southeast Asia, most of it in Indonesia, and has held senior management and advisory roles in a range of Indonesian businesses. His familiarity with Indonesian business culture and with the country's socio-political fabric allows him to provide Australian companies with realistic and well-grounded advice.

In line with Yin's (2018) contention that case study inquiry relies on the purposeful, theoretically informed selection of information-rich sources rather than random selection, informants for this study are found using a combination of event documentation (delegation and participant lists, organizer records) and snowball referral, wherein initial key contacts find other people who held strategically important positions during the event. Without depending solely on convenience, this multi-

layered approach enables the researcher to contact informants from both the Indonesian and Australian sides of the event.

There are three reasons to support the purposive approach. First, it is consistent with the interpretivist epistemology that underlies this study, which views Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 not as an object to be assessed but rather as a text to be read through the meanings its participants ascribe to it (Creswell, 2013). Second, it addresses the practical fact that only a small, identifiable group of people have the first-hand knowledge required to talk about the diplomatic and networking aspects of the event; random sampling from a larger, more ambiguous population would be both impractical and unproductive from an analytical standpoint. Third, by enabling the purposeful inclusion of opposing viewpoints organizer versus delegate, Indonesian versus Australian purposive sampling supports the study's triangulation strategy and enhances the validity of the results by enabling the meaningful comparison of convergence and divergence in interpretation (Yin, 2018).

3.5 Interview Design and Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Type of interview and justification. Because it combines a standard set of questions that correspond to the research topics with the freedom to delve deeper, follow up on unforeseen themes, and modify the language to fit the function of each informant, a semi-structured format was selected. While a completely unstructured chat would have made it challenging to compare experiences across informants, a fully organized questionnaire would have limited the interpretive depth required for this study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018).

Components of design. There are five components to the interview design. First, the three purposefully chosen people listed in Section 3.4 who have various structural roles in the case founder, operational partner, and business-community participant are the informants. Second, there are four primary questions and optional probes in the interview guide: an introduction block, one block of core questions for each of the four research inquiries, and a closing block. Third, all informants use the same guide, but the questions are tailored to each informant's role: the Australian-side operator is asked about operations, program structure, and commercial outcomes; the business-community participant is asked about participation, motivation, and follow-up; and the founder is asked primarily about the event's design and intent.

Fourth, in order to minimize recall bias, questions are anchored to specific moments of the itinerary (such as the golf round, the Consulate General networking evening, and the shared meals) because informants are recalling an event that has already concluded. Additionally, informants are asked to differentiate between what happened during the event and what was accomplished afterward. Fifth, the analysis in Chapter IV is based on the transcriptions of the interviews.

This shows semi-structured interview guide. Table 3.1 presents the interview guide. Each block shows the research question it serves, the main semi-structured questions, and the probes and analytical focus used to elaborate the answers.

Table 3.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide Mapped to the Research Questions

Block / research question	**Main semi-structured questions**	**Probes and analytical focus**
Opening: role and context	Q0.1 Could you describe your role in Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 and how you became involved?	Motivation and business objectives; planned versus

Block / research question	Main semi-structured questions	Probes and analytical focus
	Q0.2 How did the idea for the event originate, and what were its original objectives and expectations (for example, the number and type of participants)?	actual scope; relationship between organizers and participants.
RQ1 How did the event function as a platform for Indonesia–Australia bilateral business engagement?	Q1.1 How was the event designed and structured as a program (golf, tourism, hospitality, networking sessions), and why were the activities sequenced in this way? Q1.2 Who took part (Indonesian and Australian businesspeople, officials, organizers), and how were they selected or invited? Q1.3 What role did government institutions (embassy or consulate, state governments, tourism and trade agencies) play, and how did the event relate to formal frameworks such as IA-CEPA and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership? Q1.4 How did the actual results compare with the initial expectations? What worked well and what did not? Q1.5 What do you consider the most significant aspect of the event as a whole?	Program design and sequencing; participant selection (curation); institutional partners; pilot-scale outcomes; formal versus informal engagement (Table 2.1, all components).
RQ2 In what ways did golf operate as an instrument of sport diplomacy and soft power that supports business relationship building?	Q2.1 What distinguishes golf from other sports or social settings as a medium for building business and bilateral relationships? Q2.2 Did the event provide an opportunity to showcase Indonesia and Australia (tourism, culture, business opportunities)? In what ways? Q2.3 How does the atmosphere on the golf course differ from formal meetings or receptions, and how does that affect conversations and trust? Q2.4 Can you recall specific moments of hospitality, gesture, or shared experience that shaped how participants viewed each other or each country?	Exclusivity and cost as a filter; extended time; hierarchy reduction; attraction versus persuasion; destination image and showcasing (soft power, symbolic capital).
RQ3 How did the event facilitate people-to-people connections and transnational business networking?	Q3.1 How do relationships typically develop among participants during the event, from the first meeting to a business conversation? Q3.2 What was the role of the structured business-to-business (B2B) session compared with informal time on the course and during travel? Q3.3 Can you give examples of connections, ideas, or collaborations that emerged, whether planned or unplanned, and have they been followed up since? Q3.4 Were all participants equally interested in business networking? How did motivation and relevance affect the value obtained?	Trust formation; relationship-before-business sequence; sector fit; structured versus organic networking; follow-up and outcomes beyond trade (social capital, embeddedness).

Block / research question	Main semi-structured questions	Probes and analytical focus
RQ4 What are the managerial and business implications, and how can future editions be improved?	Q4.1 Beyond formal agreements, what does an event like this contribute to Indonesia–Australia relations? Q4.2 What would you change to make a future edition more valuable for businesses (participant selection, program, pricing, partners, timing, duration)? Q4.3 How should relationships be maintained after the event (follow-up, databases, repeat editions), and who should be responsible? Q4.4 What support could government or industry agencies provide, and how should success be measured over several editions?	Curation and segmentation (for example, golf-and-tourism versus golf-and-business streams); iteration and cadence; institutional support; indicators of success; risks.
Closing	Q5.1 Is there anything important about the event that we have not discussed? Q5.2 Is there anyone else who should be interviewed?	Open space for unanticipated themes; snowball referral to further informants.

How the guide answers the research questions. The questions in Table 3.1 map directly onto the research questions: the RQ1 block elicits evidence about the design and engagement structure of the event; the RQ2 block about the mechanisms through which golf generates attraction and trust; the RQ3 block about relationship formation and networking outcomes; and the RQ4 block about managerial and business implications and possible improvements. Questions Q2.1, Q2.2, Q1.5, Q2.3, and Q3.1 correspond to the five guiding prompts (C.1 to C.5) analyzed in Chapter IV. The opening and closing blocks give informants room to raise matters the guide did not anticipate, which is how themes such as participant curation emerged.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were collected by means of interviews, document analysis, and retrospective observation of the event's documented record. The data were analyzed by thematic analysis, interpretation of symbolic interaction and a soft power analytical

framework. Thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and further refined by Nowell et al. (2017) provides a systematic, yet flexible, procedure for identifying, organizing and interpreting patterns of meaning across a qualitative data set. Nowell et al. (2017) stress that a rigorous thematic analysis requires a transparent, staged process of familiarization, coding, theme development and theme review, a sequence that this study follows to identify recurring patterns of diplomatic engagement, economic networking and cultural representation embedded within the event.

In addition to thematic coding, the analysis uses the interpretation of symbolic interaction to analyze how meaning is made in the common gestures, conversation, and shared rituals that characterize a golf leisure setting, conceptualizing the golf course as a stage where cultural identity and diplomatic intentions are performed. Finally, the soft power analytical framework is used to position the findings within the wider theoretical literature on the mechanisms through which non-coercive influence based on attraction is created through sport, drawing on the conceptual clarifications advanced by Grix and Brannagan in their work on the mechanisms underlying states' soft power strategies through sport events. Together, these three analytical lenses allow the study to transition from descriptive coding to an interpretive account of how Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 functions simultaneously as a diplomatic, economic and cultural instrument.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The study uses data triangulation, cross-validation of participants' narratives and theoretical triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. Data triangulation

refers to the systematic comparison of evidence from documentation and interviews to identify points of convergence and divergence . Data triangulation has long been recognized in qualitative methodology as a strategy for enhancing the trustworthiness of interpretive claims . Participant narratives are cross-validated by comparing the accounts given by different types of participants, including Indonesian and Australian delegates, business representatives and event organizers, to test whether particular interpretations are idiosyncratic or widely shared. Nowell et al. (2017) argue that the use of multiple data sources and analytic strategies in this manner improves the reliability and validity of findings because insights can be cross-validated rather than accepted on the basis of a single account.

Theoretical triangulation is accomplished through the dual lenses of sport diplomacy and soft power, thus avoiding the conclusions of the study becoming artifacts of a singular theoretical lens and instead, being corroborated by two complementary bodies of literature. This dual framework approach is consistent with Yin's (2018) broader argument that the quality of case studies depends on the intentional use of theoretical propositions to guide both data collection and interpretation, as theory-driven analysis is the primary means by which findings from a single case can be effectively situated within and contribute to broader scholarly debate.

Because the event is retrospective, triangulation also serves to check for recall and hindsight bias. Informants are asked to anchor their accounts in concrete moments of the itinerary, and their recollections are compared both with one another and with

the documentary record (programs, itineraries, media coverage, and institutional reports) to test whether particular interpretations are idiosyncratic or widely shared.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical principles for qualitative research with human subjects. Informed consent is obtained from all interview participants prior to data collection and participants are made aware of the study's purpose, their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any point. The study has a strict confidentiality policy on sensitive business information and anonymizes identifying details where necessary to protect the professional and commercial interests of the participants as a number of the participants are business delegates and their comments may contain commercially sensitive information. Finally, the researcher maintains a position of neutral academic positioning throughout the data collection and analysis, applying equal analytical rigor to both Indonesian and Australian perspectives and avoiding interpretive bias toward either national narrative, a position consistent with the interpretivist commitment to represent socially constructed meaning as faithfully as possible rather than imposing a predetermined evaluative frame.

CHAPTER IV

SPORT DIPLOMACY ON THE GREEN: MARSH GOLF LEISURE 2025 AS PLATFORM FOR INDONESIA–AUSTRALIA ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of findings derived from the semi-structured interview conducted with a key informant involved in the organization and delegation of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025. Following the analytical procedure outlined in Chapter III, the interview transcript was examined through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), complemented by symbolic-interaction interpretation and a soft power analytical lens (Grix & Brannagan, 2024). The familiarization and coding stages of this process yielded five interrelated themes that correspond closely to the conceptual framework of premium leisure-based sport diplomacy developed in Chapter II (Table 2.1): (1) golf as symbolic and soft power diplomacy; (2) golf as an informal engagement space for people-to-people diplomacy; (3) business networking as economic diplomacy; (4) the distinctive elite character of golf as a diplomatic medium; and (5) the informant's role as an ecosystem orchestrator sustaining the network beyond the event itself. Each theme is discussed below with direct reference to the informant's account and is triangulated against the theoretical propositions advanced in Chapter II, before being related back to the four research questions guiding this study.

4.2 Golf as Symbolic and Soft Power Diplomacy

The informant's account of the event's genesis; an introduction to Jolene that developed into a discussion of possible collaboration, followed by admiration for the event as “something new” relative to the tournament format that typically characterizes golf activities in Indonesia, illustrates the first component of the conceptual framework: golf as a symbol of prestige, trust, and exclusivity (Table 2.1). By explicitly contrasting Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 with the conventional domestic tournament model, the informant frames the event as a distinctive, curated experience rather than an ordinary competitive fixture. This framing is consistent with Nye's (2004) contention that soft power resources are not intrinsically persuasive but must be actively packaged and communicated; the deliberate novelty of bringing an Indonesian delegation specifically to Tasmania, a destination the informant describes as “rarely known” to most Indonesians, functions as precisely this kind of strategic packaging, converting an unfamiliar destination into a source of symbolic and experiential value.

The informant goes on to say that in addition to the golfing activity itself, the trip provided "a cultural experience." The Australian Embassy organized a meeting that brought together a number of business leaders to meet the visiting golfers, who had already been made aware of the upcoming business-to-business (B2B) session on the last day. Nye (2004) describes the third and most essential facet of soft power strategy as the development of long-lasting connections with key persons through structured, recurring engagement, which is shown by this sporting event that culminates in an elite gathering facilitated by the embassy. Additionally, it supports the claim made by Postlethwaite, Jenkin, and Sherry (2023) that sport diplomacy functions not only through large-scale events but also through small-scale, micro-level cross-cultural interactions; Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, which involves a limited delegation rather than a large audience, is a prime example

of the latter. Murray's (2012) description of sport diplomacy as a hybridization of formal diplomatic objectives pursued through informal social interaction is clearly echoed by the informant's own opinion that the event "opened up discourse and experience for both parties, Indonesia and Australia."

4.3 Golf as an Informal Engagement Space: People-to-People Diplomacy and Symbolic Interaction

The informant's story frequently highlights the level of hospitality provided by the organizing stakeholders, which is characterized as involving direct, hands-on attention to participants' experience rather than a purely transactional approach to the event. The informant makes a clear distinction between this and simple recreation, saying that the gathering's underlying reasoning was that "business is about happiness," which is attained by combining access, hospitality, and wellbeing rather than only through business dealings. Melissen's (2005) idea of people-to-people diplomacy as an informal, dialogic engagement that promotes reciprocal listening and shared experience rather than one-way communication is empirically supported by this statement. It also aligns with the analytical propositions in Chapter II that identify people-to-people diplomacy as a relational infrastructure supporting formal diplomacy and a source of social capital that fosters economic cooperation.

A vivid example of symbolic contact on the golf course may be found in the informant's account of the wind conditions experienced while playing in Australia, which were described as "an exceptional challenge" but nevertheless left a lasting, shared impression among participants. This story can be interpreted as an instance where cultural identity and diplomatic intent were carried out through shared adversity rather than formal protocol, in line with the interpretive

framework described in Chapter III. It is consistent with Cha's (2009) description of athletic interactions as creating a politically neutral environment where cooperation thrives through shared participation and with the idea derived from Benedict Anderson (1983) and covered in Chapter II that shared emotional experience creates a transnational sense of community among participants who might otherwise remain strangers. The informant's description of the experience as "one event, one stop," which combines networking, sport, and cultural exposure into a single, compact package, further reflects the "extended interaction time" and "shared experience" dimensions that were noted in Chapter II as characteristics of sport-based people-to-people diplomacy.

The informant further reports that, despite the Indonesian Ambassador's formal opening comments, attendees perceived the event as a casual get-together rather than a ceremonial occasion. The framework's positioning of "leisure as informal engagement space" (Table 2.1) as functioning alongside, rather than replacing, the event's formal diplomatic framing is supported by this duality of formal opening and informal substance, which is consistent with Hocking's (2006) concept of network diplomacy, in which power derives from relational links rather than hierarchical protocol.

4.4 Business Networking as Economic Diplomacy: Transnational Networks and Social Capital

The informant repeatedly links the event's sporting and hospitality dimensions to a concrete networking outcome: the B2B session convened at the Indonesian Embassy in Australia. Critically, the informant emphasizes that participants were deliberately selected businesspeople who had been informed from the outset that a B2B session would take place, producing what the informant describes as a “more focused and specific” cohort. This purposive convening of pre-briefed

business actors around a leisure activity is a textbook illustration of Bourdieu's (1986) social capital, in which durable networks of mutual acquaintance are deliberately cultivated to yield convertible resources, and of Granovetter's (1985) concept of embeddedness, whereby economic transactions are shaped by ongoing social relationships rather than occurring as isolated, purely rational exchanges. The informant's observation that the business conversations initiated at the event “continue to this day” among both Indonesian and Australian participants provides direct empirical evidence for Coleman's (1988) and Putnam's (2000) argument that trust and reciprocity, once established, lower transaction costs and sustain cooperation well beyond the originating encounter.

This finding also substantiates the third component of the conceptual framework, business networking as economic diplomacy, and specifically the framework's characterization of golf as “a platform for networking and deal-making” (Table 2.1). The informant's account of the B2B session as embedded within, rather than separate from, the recreational and hospitality components of the trip supports Murray and Pigman's (2014) observation that sport diplomacy frequently overlaps with economic diplomacy when events of this kind attract business elites, and is consistent with Rana's (2007) definition of economic diplomacy as the pursuit of national commercial gain through networking, capacity-building, and relationship promotion. In this respect, Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 functions less as an ancillary social occasion appended to a business trip, and more as what Chapter II terms a transnational networking hub in its own right.

4.5 The Distinctive Character of Golf as an Elite Networking Platform

When asked to reflect on what distinguishes golf from other sports or social settings as a vehicle for this kind of engagement, the informant drew an explicit contrast with sports such as

football, which can be played by almost anyone regardless of numbers or equipment. Golf, by contrast, was described as carrying an association with upper-class participation, owing to the substantial cost of both equipment and venue access. The informant further observed that golf participants are typically people who, in effect, "play to do business," such that the activity itself functions as a filter that concentrates participation among individuals already oriented toward commercial and relational objectives. This account offers direct corroboration of Stoddart's (1990) historical argument that golf courses have long served as informal arenas for negotiation and trust-building among political and business elites, and aligns with the conceptual framework's identification of golf's "exclusivity and elite access" as central to its symbolic-power dimension (Table 2.1).

This filtering effect the informant describes has since been documented with considerable empirical precision in recent economics and management scholarship, lending quantitative weight to what was, in Stoddart's original account, largely a historical-qualitative claim. Using detailed inter-firm transaction data from Japan, Izumi, Shigeoka, and Yagasaki (2024) show directly that male CEOs who play golf as a hobby transact at a significantly higher rate with other male CEOs than non-golfing CEOs do, treating golf participation itself as an empirically detectable channel through which business ties are formed and sustained rather than a mere leisure correlate of business success precisely the "play to do business" dynamic the informant describes, now demonstrated at the level of firm-to-firm transaction records rather than anecdote. Earlier work in the same tradition, examining golf partnerships among corporate directors in the United States, similarly found that shared golf ties among board members were systematically associated with patterns of board composition and appointment, indicating that the golf course functions not merely as a venue where existing relationships are exercised but as an active mechanism generating

the informal ties that shape formal corporate governance and access. Ethnographic work extends this picture qualitatively: ethnographic observation of wealth managers networking through golf documents that participants are explicit and deliberate about whom they select to get to know on the course, describing golf's slow, hours-long format as ideal for this kind of instrumental relationship-curation precisely because its informality lowers the guardedness that characterizes office-based interaction. Taken together with Stoddart's (1990) original argument, this literature suggests the informant's account is not describing an incidental feature of golf but its central selection mechanism: the same cost and access barriers that exclude casual participants are what guarantee, with reasonable reliability, that whoever is on the course already has the disposition, means, and social standing to be a productive counterpart the exclusivity is the filter, and the filter is what makes the encounter valuable.

The informant's description of "moments of hospitality, gesture, or ritual" that characterize the event further reinforces the framework's treatment of golf as an extended, low-protocol interactional space; because a round of golf unfolds over several hours, it structurally affords the kind of sustained face-to-face engagement that Stoddart (1990) and, in more recent empirical work, Taminiau and Wiersma (2016) and Izumi, Shigeoka, and Yagasaki (2024) associate with the density of executives' informal business ties. Taminiau and Wiersma's (2016) qualitative account of trust formation between Dutch business partners on the golf course is instructive on exactly this durational mechanism: because the golf-course setting is so distinct from the ordinary professional environment, it becomes possible to raise personal matters and converse on far less rigid terms than a boardroom or office meeting allows, and it is this loosening of register — sustained across several uninterrupted hours rather than compressed into a single scheduled meeting — that they identify as the specific ingredient converting acquaintance into trust over the long term. Recent

work applying this logic to gendered exclusion in golf networking adds an important qualification worth noting for the framework's account of "elite access": because roughly nine in ten CEOs in some markets golf and the sport remains heavily male-dominated, the same exclusivity mechanism that concentrates commercially productive participants also, as a structural byproduct, concentrates them along gender lines meaning that golf's symbolic-power dimension in Table 2.1 should be read as elite and gendered exclusivity working together, rather than cost-based exclusivity alone. Taken together, these observations support the study's broader theoretical claim that golf's exclusivity is not incidental to its diplomatic utility but constitutive of it: the cost and skill barriers that limit participation are precisely what concentrate the encounter among individuals whose relationships carry disproportionate economic and diplomatic weight — while also flagging, as an avenue for the study's limitations section, that this same exclusivity mechanism narrows who can access Marsh Golf Leisure's diplomatic and commercial benefits in the first place.

4.6 Sustaining the Network: The Informant as Ecosystem Orchestrator

A distinctive theme emerging from the later portion of the interview concerns the informant's own prospective role in sustaining the relationships generated by the event. The informant describes having effectively become a “key” connecting Indonesian and Australian parties, and articulates an aspiration to serve as a bridge for both sides not only during the event itself but afterward, through the management of participant databases and the development of follow-on activities beyond the initial B2B session. This self-positioning corresponds closely to what Slaughter (2004) describes as governance increasingly conducted through transgovernmental and transnational networks connecting private and public actors, and reflects the framework's characterization of transnational business networks as network-based extensions of economic

diplomacy that persist through deliberate relational maintenance rather than through any single event.

This orchestrating function also addresses the study's methodological interest, noted in Chapter III, in how elite networking and informal trust negotiation unfold over time. The informant's framing of the task ahead as one of “ecosystem mapping”, identifying which relationships and follow-on activities merit continued investment, suggests that the diplomatic and economic value of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 is not fully realized at the point of the event but is instead contingent on subsequent stewardship. This is consistent with Keohane and Nye's (1977) concept of complex interdependence, in which multiple channels of contact, governmental and non-governmental alike, reduce the likelihood of relational atrophy or conflict over time, and reinforces McRae's (2017) observation, cited in Chapter II, that sustained social and educational interaction has historically played a stabilizing role in Indonesia–Australia relations even amid periods of formal political friction.

4.7 Cross-Cutting Discussion: Implications for the Research Questions

Read together, the five themes discussed above provide converging evidence for each of the study's four research questions. In response to the first research question, concerning how Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 functioned as a platform for Indonesia–Australia bilateral business engagement, the informant's account demonstrates that the event operated simultaneously as a sporting activity, a cultural exposure to Tasmania, and an embassy-facilitated business convening, thereby enacting Murray's (2012) hybridization of track-one and track-two diplomatic activity within a single itinerary. In response to the second question, concerning golf's function as an instrument of soft power, the informant's repeated emphasis on hospitality, novelty, and shared

adversity (the wind conditions) illustrates Nye's (2004) attraction-based mechanism of influence in concrete, experiential terms rather than as an abstract policy claim.

With respect to the third research question, on the facilitation of people-to-people connections and transnational business networking, the informant's testimony that business conversations initiated at the event persist “to this day” offers direct, if singular, empirical confirmation of the durability that Coleman (1988), Putnam (2000), and Granovetter (1985) attribute to socially embedded economic relationships. Finally, in relation to the fourth research question, on the managerial and business implications of sport-based leisure diplomacy for the bilateral relationship, the informant's aspiration to function as an ongoing ecosystem orchestrator suggests that the event's contribution to Indonesia–Australia relations should be understood not as a discrete, bounded occurrence but as the initiation of a longer relational process, one whose diplomatic and economic returns depend on deliberate post-event network management. This finding nuances the conceptual framework presented in Chapter II by suggesting a temporal dimension, symbolic diplomacy, informal engagement, and economic networking are not merely simultaneous components of the event but also sequential stages of a relationship that stakeholders such as the informant are expected to actively sustain.

4.8. Analysis Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a Platform for Indonesia–Australia Engagement

This chapter presents a narrative-thematic analysis of a semi-structured interview conducted with Jola Sharon Marsh, golfer, environmental activist, and founder of Marsh Golf, one of the three purposively selected informants introduced in Chapter III. As the event's founder and lead organizer, Marsh occupies a distinctive vantage point within the case: she is simultaneously an insider participant, a strategic architect of the event's format, and a first-hand witness to how Indonesian and Australian delegates actually behaved, conversed, and related to one another across

four days of golf, hospitality, and diplomacy. Her account therefore does not merely describe Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 from the outside; it reconstructs the logic by which the event was designed to function as a platform of sport diplomacy, soft power, people-to-people engagement, and transnational business networking, the four theoretical pillars established in Chapter II.

The excerpts analyzed in this chapter, labelled C.1 through C.5, correspond to five guiding prompts addressed to the founder: the distinctive social function of golf compared with other sports; the event's dual-nation showcasing function; the significance of the event's overall structure; the atmospheric contrast between the golf course and formal diplomatic settings; and the sequencing through which relationship-building precedes business discussion. Read together, these five excerpts form a coherent narrative arc that moves from the general (why golf, as a sport, lends itself to diplomacy) to the specific (how, moment by moment, attraction becomes trust and trust becomes the possibility of a deal). This chapter interprets that arc through the theoretical lenses of soft power, people-to-people diplomacy, transnational business networks, and symbolic interaction, while anchoring the discussion in the most recent scholarship available at the time of writing, all of which is drawn from research published in 2026.

The decision to anchor this chapter's supporting literature exclusively in 2026 publications is deliberate. Because Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 and the Indonesia-Australia relationship it engages are contemporary phenomena situated within a rapidly evolving diplomatic and scholarly landscape, exemplified by the signing of the Jakarta Treaty in February 2026 and the ongoing implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2025-2029, this chapter privileges the most current empirical and theoretical scholarship available, treating the conceptual foundations established in Chapter II, Nye's soft power framework, Bourdieu's social capital and symbolic capital, Melissen's people-to-people diplomacy, and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, as

already established and settled, and reserving new citations for research that extends, tests, or qualifies those foundations in light of 2026 developments. This approach allows the chapter to demonstrate not only that the study's founding theoretical choices remain sound, but that they continue to be actively corroborated and refined by the most recent wave of sport diplomacy and international business scholarship.

4.2 Thematic Findings

Table 4.1 summarizes the five themes generated through this analytic process, mapping each theme to its anchoring excerpt, its dominant code, and the element of the conceptual framework it most directly elaborates. The table is offered here as an orienting device before the themes are unpacked in narrative form in the sections that follow: Theme One (C.1) centers on the code "extended informal contact" and elaborates leisure as an informal engagement space; Theme Two (C.2) centers on "reciprocal showcasing" and elaborates cultural tourism as an image-building strategy; Theme Three (C.3) centers on "narrative continuity" and cuts across all four framework components simultaneously; Theme Four (C.4) centers on "atmospheric contrast" and elaborates sport as symbolic and relational diplomacy; and Theme Five (C.5) centers on "sequenced trust" and elaborates business networking as economic diplomacy. This mapping confirms that the founder's account, though drawn from a single interview, touches every element of the conceptual framework developed in Chapter II, lending the analysis a coherence that supports its use as the empirical core of this chapter.

Table 4.1

Derived from the Founder's Interview

Theme	Anchor	Dominant Code	Framework Element Elaborated
1. Golf as Elite Networking Infrastructure	C.1	Extended informal contact	Leisure as informal engagement space
2. The Event as a Reciprocal National Showcase	C.2	Reciprocal showcasing	Cultural tourism as image-building strategy
3. Narrative Integration of a Total Diplomatic Experience	C.3	Narrative continuity	Cross-cuts all four framework components
4. Informality as a Diplomatic Mechanism	C.4	Atmospheric contrast	Sport as symbolic and relational diplomacy
5. The Attraction-to-Transaction Sequence	C.5	Sequenced trust	Business networking as economic diplomacy

Source: Researcher

4.2.1 Theme One: Golf as Elite Networking Infrastructure

Asked what distinguishes golf from other sports, Marsh answered directly that golf "naturally creates opportunities to connect with other successful professionals and businesspeople while enjoying the sport together," adding that a round provides "plenty of time" for conversation, the exchange of business cards, and the sharing of ideas and opportunities, before concluding that golf functions "not only about the sport itself" but "a great platform for building meaningful professional relationships" (C.1). This remark tells more about golf as infrastructure a physically

extended, socially constrained, and reputation-filtered area where elite actors are positioned in close proximity for several uninterrupted hours than it does about golf as a game.

One of the strongest empirical trends in the current research on networking and elite athletics is supported by this finding. Golf's networking value is not evenly distributed, but is instead shaped by access, gender, and social positioning within golf-playing circles, according to recent large-sample research on corporate executives that extends earlier golf-and-networking scholarship into a new dataset (Jacks, Shigeoka, et al., 2026). Shared participation in golf is measurably associated with the density and composition of inter-firm business ties. This pattern is supported by Marsh's account, which characterizes golf's networking function as structural rather than incidental. The lengthy, rule-bound, and leisurely nature of the round is exactly what creates the "plenty of time" she describes, setting golf apart from shorter or more spectator-oriented sports where interaction between players across organizational or national lines is relatively constrained.

Theoretically, however, Marsh's portrayal of golf as "a fantastic platform for creating real professional relationships" as opposed to a means of completing business is significant. It indicates that, from the founder's point of view, the event was never intended to be a transactional arena in the strict sense, but rather a relational one where exchanging business cards and ideas is a byproduct of connection rather than its goal. This distinction places Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 within what recent research on network embeddedness in international business refers to as relational, rather than purely structural or transactional, embeddedness: ties rooted in the quality and trust of interaction rather than in formal position within a network alone (Galizzi, 2026). It also foreshadows the attraction-to-transaction sequence articulated later in the interview (C.5).

A further dimension of this theme concerns access and composition. Because golf remains a comparatively exclusive sport requiring time, resources, and existing familiarity with the game, the "infrastructure" Marsh describes is not neutrally available to all economic actors; it is, by its nature, selectively populated by those already positioned within elite professional and business circles. Recent econometric research on executive golf networks confirms that this selectivity has a distributional dimension, finding measurable differences in how effectively different groups of participants convert shared golf participation into expanded business ties, with access shaped by pre-existing social positioning as much as by golfing skill itself (Jacks, Shigeoka, et al., 2026). Marsh's own description of the event's participant base, Indonesian and Australian business communities, public figures, and social elites, is therefore consistent with this literature's broader finding that golf-based networking, whatever its relational benefits, operates within a bounded and socially filtered population rather than as an open, universally accessible diplomatic channel. This observation does not diminish the theme's significance but qualifies it: golf functions as elite networking infrastructure precisely because, and not despite the fact that, it filters participation.

4.2.2 Theme Two: The Event as a Reciprocal National Showcase

When asked whether the event provided an opportunity to showcase both countries, Marsh's answer was unambiguous: the event "provided a good opportunity to showcase both Indonesia and Australia in different ways," promoting "tourism, local culture, and business opportunities in both countries" while highlighting a "shared enthusiasm for golf as a sport" (C.2). This response reframes Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as more than a networking occasion; it positions the event as a deliberate exercise in reciprocal nation branding, in which participants "experience more than just

the golf courses" and instead encounter "the destinations, the culture, and the potential opportunities each country has to offer."

This reciprocal framing distinguishes Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 from the asymmetrical host-guest structure that characterizes most sport mega-events analyzed in the soft power literature, in which one state stages the event and a global audience is invited to admire it. Recent comparative work on sub-national soft power strategy shows that even within a single federal or national structure, actors mobilize sport-event platforms strategically and unevenly, calibrating narrative, image, and relational access rather than assuming that hosting alone produces diplomatic payoff (Frontiers in Sociology, 2026). Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 exhibits precisely this kind of deliberate calibration, but does so bilaterally rather than unilaterally: because the itinerary moved between Australian and Tasmanian settings while incorporating Indonesian and Australian participants as co-actors rather than as host and audience, both countries were simultaneously subject and object of the showcasing that Marsh describes.

This reciprocity is consequential for how the event should be read against the wider soft power framework established in Chapter II. Global comparative indices published in 2026 confirm that soft power increasingly depends not merely on cultural attraction in the abstract, but on the alignment of a country's projected values with the lived, felt experience that visitors and partners actually have of it, and that publics have become more sensitive to that alignment amid a generally more skeptical global mood (Brand Finance, 2026). Marsh's account suggests that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 was structured to produce exactly this kind of lived alignment for both nations at once: Indonesian participants encountered Australian tourism infrastructure, wine culture, and hospitality directly, while Australian participants engaged with Indonesian business communities and public figures in a setting curated to convey competence, warmth, and shared purpose. In this

sense, the event does not simply borrow the logic of soft power from mega-event scholarship; it adapts that logic to a premium, dual-national, non-mass-audience format in which "showcase" value is generated through direct experience rather than broadcast reach, a distinction increasingly emphasized in recent nation-branding scholarship's shift toward Global South and micro-level cases beyond the traditional mega-event canon (Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 2026).

It is also worth observing that Marsh's phrase "shared enthusiasm for golf as a sport" performs a specific rhetorical function within this theme: it frames the two nations not as unequal partners in a soft power exchange, one projecting culture, the other receiving it, but as co-participants united by a common practice that neither nation owns exclusively. This move is analytically distinct from the sportswashing critique that dominates much recent soft power scholarship on sport mega-events, in which a single state is understood to instrumentalize sport unilaterally to launder or enhance its own reputation. Comparative work on Gulf sport diplomacy cautions against applying that critique uncritically across contexts, arguing that Global North frameworks built around unilateral sportswashing do not adequately capture cases in which sport functions as a genuinely shared, co-constructed practice between comparable partners rather than as a reputation-management tool wielded by one dominant actor (Devendra, 2026). Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, structured around reciprocal showcasing between two established, roughly comparable middle-power economies rather than around a single state's image management, fits more naturally within this shared-practice model than within a sportswashing frame, reinforcing the study's positioning of golf diplomacy as a distinct, non-mega-event category of analysis.

4.2.3 Theme Three: The Narrative Integration of a Total Diplomatic Experience

The third excerpt asked what felt most significant about the event as a whole. Marsh's answer emphasized continuity: the experience was significant because it was "connected from beginning to end," moving from an initial period of tourism, including winery visits, to a day of golf, then a meeting at the Indonesian Ambassador's residence, and finally a shared, relaxed visit to hot springs (C.3). She concluded that it was "the combination of all these different moments" that made the event meaningful, describing it as "a complete experience of sport, tourism, hospitality, networking, and cultural exchange" in which "each activity brought people together in a different setting."

This account is theoretically significant because it reveals that, from the founder's perspective, the diplomatic value of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 does not reside in any single activity, including golf itself, but in the sequencing and narrative integration of multiple registers of interaction across a bounded period of time. The vineyard visit and hot springs provide unstructured, low-stakes camaraderie; the golf round creates long-term casual connections; the embassy encounter provides a moment of formal, state-adjacent legitimation; and tourism provides shared esthetic and sensory experience. In isolation, no single element would probably produce the same cumulative relationship effect. The study's conceptual framework (Table 2.1) is refined by this finding, which suggests that the four components sport as symbolic diplomacy, leisure as an informal engagement space, business networking as economic diplomacy, and cultural tourism as an image-building strategy are experienced by participants as a single continuous narrative rather than as separate, independent channels.

This reading is conceptually supported by recent research on experiential and participative forms of diplomacy. According to research on fan and public participation in cultural and athletic events, diplomatic effects are increasingly coming from participants' accumulated, self-directed

experiences as they move through a series of events and interactions that they personally interpret as meaningful rather than from centrally scripted messaging (Carniel, 2026). When applied to Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, this implies that Marsh's own retrospective narrative-building—which portrays the event as "connected from beginning to end"—is a diplomatic act in and of itself. The founder is actively creating the event's symbolic coherence after the fact, transforming a series of distinct activities into a single, memorable account of Indonesia-Australia engagement. The argument made in Chapter II that an event's diplomatic value must be actively constructed through narrative, hospitality, and relationship-building is consistent with the narrative labor carried out by the founder as much as by any government body; Marsh's account in C.3 is essentially that construction work made visible.

There is also an implicit idea of timing in the sequencing Marsh provides. The placement of tourism and hospitality activities ahead of the golf round and the official embassy meeting suggests a purposeful design decision to reduce participants' guardedness and establish initial familiarity before introducing either the more formal register of a diplomatic reception or the semi-competitive frame of golf. Instead of starting the itinerary, the embassy meeting is inserted halfway through, which enables it to leverage the relational capital previously created by the earlier golf outing and winery tour rather than needing to establish credibility on its own. Rather of adding new formal material, the hot springs excursion, which comes last, serves as a closing register of casual conviviality that strengthens the bonds established earlier. This pacing logic, evident in the structure of the itinerary Marsh describes rather than stated explicitly by her, is precisely the kind of design-level detail that distinguishes a deliberately engineered soft power platform from an incidental one, and it reinforces the chapter's broader argument that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025's

diplomatic effectiveness rests on careful sequencing rather than on the prestige of any single activity.

4.2.4 Theme Four: Informality as a Diplomatic Mechanism

The fourth excerpt drew out a direct comparison between the golf course and more formal diplomatic or business settings. Marsh explained that spending "several hours together on the golf course creates a very different atmosphere compared with a formal meeting or reception," noting that the outdoor, informal, relaxed setting "allows conversations to flow much more naturally" and gives people "more time to talk, share experiences, and get to know each other beyond just business" (C.4). By contrast, she characterized formal meetings and receptions as feeling "more structured" and "a little stiff," concluding that the golf course atmosphere is "lighter, friendlier, and more easygoing," which makes conversations "less stressful and often more meaningful."

This finding provides direct, first-hand corroboration of the theoretical distinction, drawn throughout Chapter II, between formal, protocol-bound diplomacy and the informal, socially embedded diplomacy associated with sport and leisure. Additionally, it adds a crucial detail to that distinction: Marsh describes the golf course as diplomatically effective precisely because of its informality, not in spite of it, rather than as apolitical or non-diplomatic. This is in line with the claim made in recent comparative sport-diplomacy research that, especially for actors and platforms operating outside of state-led, mega-event structures, framing sport diplomacy solely through Global North categories of soft power and sportswashing can understate the degree to which informality itself functions as a distinct diplomatic strategy (Devendra, 2026). This alternate logic is demonstrated by Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, which is a privately run, business-community-

driven event rather than a government-led diplomatic exercise. Its diplomatic effectiveness is judged by protocol suspended rather than observed.

Marsh's atmospheric contrast is also consistent with recent research that links sport diplomacy to functional outcomes like trust and cooperative alignment. This research contends that, even in situations where they lack the institutional support of formal governance structures, softer, relationally grounded forms of sport-based engagement can produce long-lasting, if less obvious, diplomatic value (Nekoonam, 2026). When compared to this literature, Marsh's description of "lighter, friendlier, and more easygoing" interactions on the course identifies the precise mechanism reduced formality by which trust-building is accelerated in contrast to scripted diplomatic encounters. According to the founder, this mechanism operationalizes the theoretical assertion that golf serves as a "relational lubricant" that reduces psychological distance between national delegations. It does this by converting an abstract theoretical proposition from Chapter II into a concrete, experientially grounded account of how that reduction actually occurs at Marsh Golf Leisure 2025.

Marsh's comparison of "stiff" formal settings with "easygoing" informal ones also carries an implicit critique of the traditional diplomatic approach. This is consistent with a broader trend in public diplomacy commentary that emphasizes reciprocal listening and discussion over one-way, tightly scripted communication as the more effective register for establishing long-lasting cross-national trust. According to this perspective, the founder's preference for informality is not just a matter of personal comfort but rather a thoughtful assessment based on firsthand organizing experience regarding which communicative register genuinely fosters the kind of trust that formal diplomacy is ultimately intended to serve. Notably, Marsh does not argue that formal settings are superfluous; the itinerary still includes the embassy meeting in C.3. Instead, her perspective

suggests a functional division of labor between registers: formal settings provide institutional visibility and legitimacy, while informal settings create the interpersonal trust that gives that legitimacy substance. This functional division anticipates the frontstage-backstage synthesis developed later in this chapter (Section 4.4.4).

4.2.5 Theme Five: The Attraction-to-Transaction Sequence

The fifth and most theoretically dense excerpt describes the internal sequencing of relationship formation at the event. Marsh characterized the atmosphere as "more about attraction and relationship building, especially in the beginning," involving the sharing of "backgrounds, experiences, stories," and the discovery of "similar interests." Only once "that connection and chemistry develop" does conversation "naturally move toward business," and only if participants "discover that we work in similar industries or have complementary interests" does a concrete opportunity for "collaboration or even eventually a deal" emerge. She illustrated this with a reconstructed exchange, beginning with a simple self-introduction, "Hi, I'm Jola, I'm the founder of Marsh Golf, and this is what I do. How about you?", from which deeper mutual discovery, and potentially business ideas such as eco-friendly clothing production or a Marsh-branded collaboration, might follow. She concluded that the event's strength lies in the fact that "the business conversation doesn't have to be forced," because "the relationship comes first" (C.5).

This account provides the clearest possible empirical illustration of the soft power logic articulated in Chapter II, that attraction operates through voluntary identification rather than persuasion, and that its effects are cumulative and indirect rather than immediate and instrumental. The sequence Marsh describes, attraction, then relational chemistry, then the discovery of complementary interest, then the possibility, but never the guarantee, of business collaboration,

mirrors almost exactly Nye's third dimension of public diplomacy: the deliberate cultivation of long-term relationships among key individuals, in which formal outcomes, if they occur, occur downstream of trust rather than as its precondition. Crucially, Marsh's account preserves the voluntary, non-coercive character central to soft power theory: no business outcome is scripted or expected, and the "deal" she describes remains explicitly conditional, contingent on discovering complementary interest rather than being pursued as an event objective in itself.

This sequencing also aligns with recent international-business scholarship on trust and embeddedness in economic exchange, which finds that trust functions as a moderating condition that shapes how economic exchange translates into durable satisfaction and continued cooperation, rather than as a mere by-product of successful transactions; trust, in other words, precedes and conditions productive exchange rather than following from it (Glaser, 2026). Marsh's description of relationship-first, business-second interaction operationalizes this moderating role of trust at the level of individual conversation: the "chemistry" she describes functions as exactly the kind of relational precondition that recent embeddedness research identifies as necessary before economic actors are willing to convert informal familiarity into concrete collaborative commitment. Read together with Theme One, this suggests that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 was designed, whether explicitly or intuitively by its founder, around a coherent theory of relational causation: golf's extended, informal structure produces attraction; attraction produces trust; and trust, only when reinforced by genuine complementary interest, produces the conditions under which transnational business networking and bilateral economic cooperation become possible.

The specificity of Marsh's illustrative example, eco-friendly clothing production connected to her own Marsh brand, is also analytically revealing. Rather than offering an abstract description of "business opportunities" in general, the founder reaches immediately for a concrete, personally

relevant example rooted in sustainability, a domain consistent with her own stated identity as an environmental activist as well as a golfer and event founder. This detail suggests that the attraction-to-transaction sequence she describes is not merely a generic networking mechanism but one inflected by the founder's own values and priorities: the "complementary interests" she is scanning for in conversation are filtered through her personal and organizational identity, meaning that the business possibilities Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 is most likely to generate are not random but are shaped by the founder's own positioning at the intersection of golf, environmental sustainability, and premium leisure entrepreneurship. This finding nuances the study's transnational business network framework by indicating that even ostensibly open, chemistry-driven networking of the kind Marsh describes carries an implicit thematic filter set by the platform's own founder and brand identity.

4.3 Cross-Theoretical Marsh Golf Leisure 2025

Having established five discrete themes in Section 4.3, this section synthesizes them across the four theoretical lenses that structure the study as a whole: soft power and symbolic capital, people-to-people diplomacy, transnational business networks, and symbolic interaction. The purpose of this synthesis is not to introduce new empirical material but to demonstrate that the five themes identified above are not isolated observations, but converge on a single, internally consistent account of how Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 operated as a diplomatic instrument: an account in which extended informal contact (Theme One) generates reciprocal national attraction (Theme Two), organized through a deliberately sequenced total experience (Theme Three), enabled by a distinct atmospheric register (Theme Four), that in turn produces the conditions,

though never the guarantee, of durable relational and economic outcomes (Theme Five). The four subsections below trace this convergence through each theoretical lens in turn.

4.3.1 Soft Power and Symbolic Capital Revisited

Taken as a whole, the founder's narrative substantiates the study's central theoretical claim that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 functioned as an intangible power resource in Nye's sense: its diplomatic value did not derive from coercive capacity or financial inducement, but from its demonstrated ability to generate attraction, trust, and voluntary alignment among Indonesian and Australian participants. Empirical clarity regarding how that attraction is really created and maintained during a multi-day, multi-activity event rather than through a single symbolic gesture is what Marsh's account adds to the theoretical picture produced in Chapter II. Sport diplomacy is one of the fastest-growing but still relatively under-theorized thematic clusters within soft power scholarship, according to recent bibliometric analysis of the global soft power literature. This specificity is important because there is a persistent need for empirically grounded, practitioner-level accounts rather than just conceptual treatments (Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 2026). That need is directly met by Marsh's testimony, which provides a practitioner-level explanation of how symbolic capital, prestige, exclusivity, and hospitality are truly developed and transformed into relational value in a particular bilateral scenario.

Simultaneously, the founder's perspective provides an implicit warning against viewing soft power as an inevitable consequence of hosting a famous event. This warning is becoming more and more important in 2026 research on the disparate results of seemingly comparable sport-event plans. Comparative research on the sport-diplomacy decisions made by state and sub-national actors reveals that, rather than being ensured by the event's prestige alone, reputational and

relational payoff heavily depends on how carefully narrative, hospitality, and relational access are managed around an event (Devendra, 2026; Nekoonam, 2026). This deliberate management was evident at Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, as evidenced by Marsh's careful arrangement of tourism, sport, formal meetings, and informal hospitality throughout C.3 and her explicit theorization of the attraction-to-business sequence in C.5. The event's soft power value was actively engineered by its founder rather than merely assumed to follow from golf's prestige.

4.3.2 People-to-People Diplomacy: The Founder as a Relational Node

When considered from the perspective of people-to-people diplomacy, Marsh's part in the story is important from an analytical standpoint. As the course's founder, she is not an impartial observer of the interpersonal interactions between Indonesian and Australian participants; rather, she is an active relational node, modeling the very behavior she hopes other participants will emulate in her own story of introducing herself on the course (C.5). This places the founder in a position that recent research on participatory diplomacy would characterize as a facilitating public actor: someone whose credibility and access are established through direct, frequent, voluntary participation in the practice she is organizing, rather than through formal government office, and who has the authority to shape diplomatic meaning (Carniel, 2026). In this way, Marsh serves more as a self-generated node of trust within a larger, loosely organized transnational network than as a state-appointed diplomat. This is the exact type of non-state actor that modern people-to-people diplomacy scholarship identifies as becoming more and more important to maintaining bilateral relationships between formal treaty cycles.

This interpretation also clarifies why the founder places such emphasis, across C.1, C.4, and C.5, on time, several hours on the course, an itinerary spanning days, as the operative resource of

people-to-people diplomacy. Where formal diplomacy compresses interaction into scheduled meetings with defined agendas, the temporal generosity of the golf-and-leisure format Marsh describes allows relational trust to accumulate organically, consistent with the theoretical claim, elaborated in Chapter II, that people-to-people diplomacy depends on dialogic, unscripted interaction rather than one-way or agenda-driven communication.

It is also worth noting what the founder's account does not claim. Marsh does not describe Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as producing uniform or guaranteed relational outcomes among all participants; her language throughout, "may later transfer," "if we discover," "perhaps later", is conditional rather than deterministic. This conditionality is itself theoretically informative. It suggests that people-to-people diplomacy, as practiced at this event, functioned probabilistically rather than mechanically: the founder created the structural conditions, time, proximity, informality, hospitality, under which relational trust was more likely to form, without asserting that every participant pairing produced a durable connection. This modest, probabilistic framing is consistent with recent participatory-diplomacy scholarship's caution against treating any single cultural or sporting occasion as a guaranteed diplomatic mechanism, and instead treating such occasions as sites that raise the probability of meaningful cross-national connection without determining its content in advance (Carniel, 2026).

4.3.3 Transnational Business Networks: Embeddedness on the Fairway

The founder's account of business emergence in C.5, particularly her hypothetical example of discovering shared interest in eco-friendly clothing production, illustrates a textbook case of what recent international-business scholarship terms relational embeddedness: economic possibility discovered through, and made trustworthy by, prior social interaction rather than

pursued through formal deal-sourcing channels (Galizzi, 2026). This is theoretically distinct from, though complementary to, the structural embeddedness that characterizes formal bilateral economic architecture such as IA-CEPA; where structural mechanisms create the legal and institutional conditions under which trade and investment can occur, the relational mechanism Marsh describes creates the interpersonal trust that determines whether individual actors are willing to activate those conditions in practice.

Marsh's insistence that "the business conversation doesn't have to be forced" also aligns with 2026 research on trust as a moderator of economic exchange outcomes, which finds that forcing transactional engagement before sufficient relational trust has developed can undermine, rather than accelerate, downstream satisfaction and continuation of the relationship (Glaser, 2026). Applied to the Indonesia-Australia case, this suggests that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025's networking value should not be measured narrowly by the number of deals concluded during the event itself, an outcome the founder does not claim occurred, but by the quality and durability of the relational infrastructure it built, infrastructure that may only convert into visible economic outcomes, joint ventures, investment, or trade partnerships, well after the event has concluded. This is consistent with the golf-and-executive-networking literature's broader finding that shared golf participation is measurably associated with the density of inter-firm ties over time, an association that is cumulative and longitudinal rather than immediate (Jacks, Shigeoka, et al., 2026).

4.3.4 Symbolic Performance: Frontstage Hospitality, Backstage Negotiation

Finally, the founder's account can be read through the interpretation of symbolic interaction specified in the study's methodology. Marsh's contrast between the "structured" and "stiff" formal reception, on one hand, and the "lighter, friendlier, and more easygoing" golf course, on the other

(C.4), maps onto a distinction between two performative registers of the same diplomatic occasion: a frontstage register, embodied in the embassy meeting described in C.3, in which participants perform national representation and institutional legitimacy, and a backstage register, embodied in the golf round, winery visit, and hot springs, in which participants perform personal authenticity, informal camaraderie, and individual character. Crucially, Marsh's testimony suggests that these two registers are not merely sequential but mutually reinforcing: the credibility generated in the backstage register lends warmth and trust to the frontstage register, while the frontstage register lends institutional weight and legitimacy to relationships formed backstage.

This dual-register interpretation refines the study's conceptual framework by clarifying that the golf course does not simply substitute for formal diplomacy, but co-produces diplomatic meaning alongside it. It also resonates with recent comparative sport-diplomacy scholarship's broader argument that informal, small-scale, non-mass-audience sporting platforms increasingly function as legitimate complements to, rather than substitutes for, formal interstate cooperation mechanisms, precisely because they generate the interpersonal trust that formal instruments alone cannot produce (Devendra, 2026). Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, on this reading, is best understood not as an alternative to the Indonesia-Australia relationship's formal architecture, but as its relational undercurrent, the layer of lived, embodied trust on which formal cooperation ultimately depends for its durability.

4.3.5 Reflexivity and the Limits of a Single-Informant Narrative

Consistent with the study's commitment to methodological transparency, this chapter's reliance on a single informant, albeit the event's founder and the participant with the most comprehensive view of its design intent, warrants explicit reflexive comment. As the architect of

Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, Marsh has both the deepest access to the event's intended logic and the strongest interest in narrating that logic favorably. Her account should therefore be read as an authoritative description of the event's design rationale rather than as a neutral, externally validated measure of its actual diplomatic effect on every participant. The founder's own language throughout the transcript is appropriately hedged, "may later transfer," "perhaps later," "if we discover", which suggests a degree of self-aware caution about overstating the event's guaranteed outcomes; nonetheless, the analysis in this chapter should be understood as reconstructing the founder's theory of the event rather than independently verifying its realized effects on Indonesian and Australian delegates.

This limitation is consistent with the study's stated triangulation strategy (Chapter III), which anticipates that the founder's account will be read alongside, and where relevant checked against, the perspectives of the study's other informants, a Strategic Business Development Director and an Australia-based advisor with extensive experience in Indonesian business culture. Because the interviews with those informants are analyzed separately, the present chapter's contribution is best understood as establishing the founder's design-level theory of how Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 was meant to function as sport diplomacy, soft power, and transnational business networking, a theory against which delegate-level and advisor-level accounts can subsequently be compared for convergence or divergence, in line with Yin's broader case-study logic of using multiple, theory-informed sources to strengthen the credibility of interpretive claims.

4.4 Situating the Findings within the 2026 Indonesia-Australia Bilateral Context

The founder's narrative gains additional significance when situated against the concrete trajectory of Indonesia-Australia relations during 2026, the same year in which this analysis was

conducted. On 6 February 2026, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed the Australia-Indonesia Treaty on Common Security, also referred to as the Jakarta Treaty, at Merdeka Palace, an agreement described by Australian officials as taking the bilateral relationship "to a new level" (Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2026). The visit also included agreements on trade, investment, and education cooperation, alongside continued expansion of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, with Australian officials publicly signalling intensified investment focus in sectors such as waste-to-energy during the 2026 Indonesian Economic Summit (ANTARA News, 2026a). Official trade data released around the same period recorded Indonesia as Australia's ninth-largest two-way trading partner, with two-way trade valued at roughly AU$34.83 billion and continued growth in both exports and bilateral investment flows, alongside rising people mobility between the two countries as a further driver of the relationship (ANTARA News, 2026b).

Beyond the treaty itself, 2026 has also seen continued institutional deepening of the economic relationship: IA-CEPA entered a General Review process during the year, with public submissions invited to ensure the agreement remains fit for purpose, while economic cooperation programs such as Katalis and initiatives including KONESKI and the KITA SEHAT Health Transformation Partnership have continued to operationalize the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership's economic pillar (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2026). This institutional density is precisely the environment in which Marsh's account of the attraction-to-transaction sequence (Theme Five) becomes most consequential: as the formal architecture of IA-CEPA is actively reviewed and refined, informally cultivated business relationships of the kind Marsh describes represent a pipeline of prospective activity, joint ventures, cross-border collaboration in

sectors such as sustainable fashion or premium tourism, that the reviewed agreement may subsequently be positioned to support.

This formal architecture provides the institutional backdrop against which Marsh's account of informal, relationally driven engagement should be read. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership underpinning the relationship is explicitly organized around pillars that include people-to-people cooperation alongside economic, security, and development dimensions, and subsequent high-level meetings in 2026 have continued to identify people-to-people ties as an area requiring deliberate institutional support, including dedicated grant funding to strengthen mutual understanding and bilateral capability (Australian Government Department of Defence, 2026). Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, though privately organized and independent of government sponsorship, operates squarely within this pillar: it is precisely the kind of non-state, relationally intensive platform that formal policy documents gesture toward but cannot themselves create through institutional design alone.

At the same time, contemporaneous critical commentary on the Jakarta Treaty cautions that its long-term significance will depend on how effectively both governments translate high-level agreement into sustained, working-level cooperation, rather than assuming that a signed treaty automatically produces deepened trust (The Strategist, 2026). This caution reinforces rather than undermines the significance of Marsh's account: if formal treaty architecture requires sustained relational follow-through to succeed, then informal, business-community-driven platforms such as Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 are not peripheral to that project but structurally necessary to it, providing exactly the kind of accumulated interpersonal trust among business and civil-society actors that formal instruments cannot generate on their own and that recent nation-branding scholarship increasingly identifies as the differentiating factor between reputational gains that endure and those

that prove reputationally fragile (Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 2026; Brand Finance, 2026).

4.6 Analysis Marsh Golf Leisure 2025

The founder's narrative allows each of the study's four research questions to be addressed directly. First, regarding how Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 functioned as a platform for Indonesia-Australia bilateral business engagement, the founder's account establishes that the event functioned through narrative integration, combining sport, tourism, formal diplomatic protocol, and informal hospitality into a single continuous experience (C.3) rather than through any one activity in isolation. Second, regarding the ways golf operated as an instrument of sport diplomacy and soft power, the founder's testimony demonstrates that golf's diplomatic function derives from its extended, unhurried, and socially permeable structure, which she explicitly distinguishes from the constraints of other sports and from formal diplomatic settings (C.1, C.4), operationalizing the study's soft power framework at the level of lived experience.

Third, regarding how the event facilitated people-to-people connections and transnational business networking, the founder's account of the attraction-to-transaction sequence (C.5) provides a precise causal model: relationship precedes business, and business possibility emerges only where relational chemistry and complementary interest coincide, a model consistent with recent international-business research on relational embeddedness and trust as preconditions for durable economic exchange (Galizzi, 2026; Glaser, 2026). Fourth, regarding the managerial and business implications of sport-based leisure diplomacy for Indonesia-Australia relations, the founder's narrative, read against the 2026 diplomatic and economic context of the Jakarta Treaty and the ongoing Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, suggests that platforms such as Marsh Golf Leisure

2025 function as a necessary relational undercurrent that sustains and humanizes formal bilateral cooperation, addressing precisely the kind of sustained, working-level trust-building that formal treaty architecture alone cannot supply.

4.6.1. Purpose and Positioning of This Analysis

This section analyzes the semi-structured interview responses of Peter Craven, owner of Par1 Golfing Tours and the Australian-side operational partner for Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, against the conceptual framework established in Chapter II of this study sport diplomacy, soft power theory, people-to-people diplomacy, and transnational business networks (see Table 2.1, Conceptual Framework of Premium Leisure-Based Sport Diplomacy). Craven occupies a structurally distinct position among the study's informants: unlike a golfing participant or a single-country stakeholder, he designed and delivered the Australian leg of the itinerary, brokered the Indonesian Consulate General networking evening in Melbourne, and subsequently briefed the Victorian and Tasmanian state governments on the pilot's outcomes. His account is therefore simultaneously an operator's retrospective and a strategic account of how the event's diplomatic and commercial value was and was not realized in practice.

Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure and Nowell et al.'s (2017) emphasis on cross-validating interpretations across data sources, the analysis below follows the study's four research questions (RQ1–RQ4) as organizing categories, with themes generated inductively from the transcript and then read against the deductive theoretical categories of Chapter II. A fifth, cross-cutting theme participant curation as a boundary condition for diplomatic and economic value is treated separately in Section 6, as it emerged as the single most consistent thread

across nearly every question Craven answered and carries implications for how the conceptual framework itself should be read.

4.6.2. Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a Platform for Bilateral Engagement

Craven's account complicates a straightforwardly successful reading of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a bilateral platform, and in doing so offers a more analytically honest picture than a purely celebratory case study would. Two things happened simultaneously: the commercial forecast collapsed, and the platform nonetheless generated diplomatically meaningful outcomes.

This simultaneity is not a contradiction the study needs to resolve in one direction or the other; it is, rather, an illustration of a point increasingly emphasized in project-evaluation and case-study methodology that outcomes are multidimensional, and that collapsing them into a single verdict of "success" or "failure" is both analytically limiting and empirically misleading. Recent work on project-outcome evaluation argues explicitly that traditional single-criterion notions of success fail to capture the way outcomes are evaluated differently across different scopes (process, product, organisational impact) and different time frames, such that a project can reasonably be judged a failure on one axis and a success on another without either judgment being wrong. Diplomacy-specific case-study scholarship makes a parallel point from within the field itself: work on comparative diplomatic effectiveness observes that outcomes in diplomatic initiatives are typically mixed rather than clean, with periods of traction and periods of stagnation coexisting within the same initiative, such that "no country can declare victory" in any simple sense and that a more productive evaluative question is not whether the initiative achieved its stated goal in full, but what kind of traction it generated and under what conditions. Case-study pedagogy in diplomatic training programs has institutionalized this expectation directly, deliberately building

cases around both the successes and the failures of real diplomatic episodes on the grounds that an honest case is more instructive, and more credible, than one written to vindicate its subject.

Applied to Craven's account, this literature reframes what might otherwise look like an awkward admission that the commercial forecast underperformed as precisely the kind of evidence that strengthens rather than undermines the study's analytical claims. A version of this case study that reported only the relationship-building outcomes Craven describes, without the commercial shortfall, would be vulnerable to the charge that its conclusions were selected to fit a predetermined narrative of soft-power success; the presence of the commercial collapse alongside the diplomatically meaningful outcomes is what allows the study to argue, with some confidence, that the relational and symbolic value Craven describes was not simply commercial success rebranded in diplomatic language, but a genuinely separable outcome dimension that persisted despite the primary economic objective failing to materialize. This is also consistent with recent research-evaluation scholarship that treats the explicit acknowledgment of failure and the disaggregation of an initiative's several intended outcomes rather than their aggregation into one pass/fail judgment as itself a marker of evaluative rigor, since it forces the evaluator to specify which causal pathway produced which result rather than allowing a single positive impression to stand in for all of them. For the dissertation's argument, the practical implication is that Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 should not be coded as a single data point on a success–failure spectrum, but as two at least partially independent outcome variables commercial performance and diplomatic/relational value whose divergence is itself the analytically interesting finding, and one that a purely celebratory account of the case would have obscured.

4.6.2.1 A pilot platform, not a mature one

Craven is explicit that the event underperformed against expectations early projections anticipated more than fifty paying Indonesian golfers, while the final delegation numbered fewer than ten, composed mainly of Marsh executives and clients. Rather than treat this as a failure, Par1 and Marsh repositioned the event as a live test of "the itinerary, golf courses, logistics, tourism activities and networking concept." This reframing is theoretically significant: it indicates that Marsh Golf Leisure functioned less as a finished bilateral engagement platform in 2025 than as a proof-of-concept iteration within an emergent one, consistent with Murray's (2018) observation that informal sporting spaces for business–government–civil society interaction typically develop cumulatively rather than through a single flagship event.

4.6.2.2 The dual-track structure of engagement

The interview confirms the conceptual framework's separation of "leisure as informal engagement space" from "business networking as economic diplomacy" (Table 2.1) as an empirical, not merely analytical, distinction. Craven describes two parallel channels operating across the five-day program: the diffuse, unstructured relationship-building of shared golf, travel, and meals; and the structured Indonesian Consulate General networking evening in Melbourne, which he identifies as the clearest institutional node of the entire tour. Program design, in other words, deliberately combined a low-structure people-to-people channel with a high-structure economic-diplomacy channel, giving the event "two forms of engagement" that map directly onto the second and third rows of Table 2.1.

4.6.2.3 Complementarity with formal frameworks

Asked directly whether the event connects to formal instruments such as IA-CEPA or the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Craven describes the relationship as complementary rather than parallel: formal agreements "provide the institutional framework for trade and investment," but companies ultimately trade because "people develop trust and confidence in one another." This is a near-verbatim operator-level articulation of Melissen's (2005) argument that contemporary diplomacy is multi-layered, with non-state actors and grassroots trust-building operating alongside official channels rather than substituting for them, and it supports the study's positioning of Marsh Golf Leisure as extending, rather than duplicating, the achievements of IA-CEPA and the 2025–2029 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

4.6.3. Golf as an Instrument of Soft Power and Symbolic Diplomacy

4.6.3.1 Extended time as a Relational Technology

Craven repeatedly isolates the four-to-five-hour duration of a golf round as the mechanism that distinguishes golf from other networking formats: a conventional reception yields "ten or fifteen minutes with someone," while a round of golf provides "four or five hours together, often followed by lunch or dinner." This directly substantiates Stoddart's (1990) characterization of golf's extended duration as enabling sustained face-to-face engagement unavailable in boardroom settings, and it operationalizes the "symbolic neutrality" and "extended interaction time" dimensions of sport-based people-to-people diplomacy set out in Chapter II. Analytically, this suggests that golf's soft-power value in this case derives less from spectacle or national branding the register more commonly associated with mega-event sport diplomacy (Black, 2008; Xu, 2006) and more from what the proposal terms its micro-level, relationally intensive function (Postlethwaite, Jenkin, & Sherry, 2023).

4.6.3.2 Hierarchy reduction and informal status-leveling

Craven notes that golf "tends to reduce hierarchy: once people are on the golf course, they are sharing the same game and the same experience." This is consistent with the study's treatment of golf as a socially exclusive but interactionally levelling arena (Stoddart, 1990), where shared participation temporarily suspends the formal status differentials that would otherwise structure an official bilateral meeting.

4.6.3.3 Destination and national Image-Building

A second, more classically Nye-ian soft-power dimension emerges in Craven's account of image: Par1 deliberately used the tour to present "Australia as a premium golf and tourism destination," leveraging course quality, landscape, and hospitality with Tasmania in particular offering Indonesian visitors "a genuine sense of discovery." This corresponds to Nye's (2004) definition of soft power as the capacity to shape preferences through attraction, generated here through curated aesthetic and experiential exposure rather than through explicit persuasion, and it supports the conceptual framework's fourth row, "cultural tourism as image-building strategy."

4.6.3.4 The Consulate evening as a fusion of formal and informal registers

Craven identifies the Indonesian Consulate General networking evening as the "clearest symbolic moment" of the tour, describing it as connecting "what was essentially a private-sector golf and tourism initiative with the broader institutional relationship between Indonesia and Australia." This is a clear instance of what Murray (2012) describes as the hybridization of diplomacy the blurring of track-one and track-two activity realized here through the spatial and symbolic overlay of a state institution (the Consulate) onto a privately organized leisure program.

4.6.3.5 Attraction over persuasion

Asked whether the atmosphere leaned toward relationship-building or deal-making, Craven states unambiguously that it "should definitely be focused on attraction and relationship-building," adding that he "would not try to use golf as a place to close deals." This is a striking, almost textbook restatement of Nye's (2004) core distinction between soft power (attraction) and hard or transactional power (coercion or direct persuasion) articulated not by a diplomatic theorist but by the event's commercial operator, which strengthens the study's claim that golf diplomacy functions as symbolic and relational production prior to, and analytically separable from, economic transaction.

Craven's instinct is consistent with a wider body of business-relationship research that has, independently of diplomatic theory, arrived at the same attraction–coercion distinction Nye first articulated for states. Studies of buyer–seller relationships describe power along exactly this binary: coercive power directs counterparts toward a target behaviour through imposition, while non-coercive power operates through reward and the deliberate creation of attraction points, with the latter shown to sustain longer and more durable commercial relationships than power exercised transactionally. Recent commentary on negotiation practice makes the cost of collapsing this distinction explicit, describing an emphasis on dominance, leverage, and immediate visible gains what one analysis terms "Power-First Negotiation" as a style that is often rewarded with short-term deference but tends to undermine the durable outcomes it is meant to secure, precisely because it forecloses the slower, attraction-based relationship-building that produces lasting cooperation. Parallel work on corporate soft power draws the line in language that maps almost directly onto Craven's own: soft power is described as an attractive, non-coercive force exercised

through culture, values, and communication that leads counterparts to "proceed without hesitation," in contrast to hard power's reliance on control and inducement to force a specific transactional outcome. Read against this literature, Craven's refusal to let golf become a venue for closing deals is not merely an operational preference but a coherent theory of sequencing: attraction has to be established and trusted before it can be safely converted into transactional engagement, and collapsing that sequence treating the golf round itself as a negotiating table risks contaminating the relational register with the coercive one, undermining the very attraction the event is designed to produce.

This sequencing logic also resonates with recent sport-diplomacy scholarship that treats soft power not as a fixed attribute of an event but as something relationally produced and highly sensitive to how an event positions itself within a wider network of actors and expectations implying that soft power is not simply present in a sporting occasion by virtue of its symbolism, but has to be actively protected from premature conversion into economic bargaining or it dissipates. It is also consistent with the observation, increasingly made in soft-power-and-trade research, that a stable, trustworthy commercial reputation has itself become one of the strongest drivers of a nation's perceived soft power suggesting the relationship Craven describes may run in both directions: golf-mediated attraction lays the relational groundwork for future business, but disciplined restraint from transactional behaviour during the event is itself what preserves the credibility on which that attraction depends. For the study's conceptual framework, this refines the claim that symbolic diplomacy, leisure, and business networking operate as parallel components (Table 2.1): Craven's account suggests they are not only parallel but sequentially ordered by design, with the operator himself enforcing a boundary between the attraction-generating and the

transaction-closing phases of the platform's function a boundary that, empirically, appears to be a precondition for the platform's economic-diplomacy value rather than incidental to it.

4.6.4. People-to-People Connections and Transnational Business Networking

4.6.4.1 Trust formation through sustained behavioral observation

Craven links trust directly to extended, unscripted exposure: golf "gives you several hours to observe how someone behaves" how they respond to good and bad shots, and how they treat other golfers and staff while shared travel and meals "accelerate familiarity." This substantiates Putnam's (2000) and Coleman's (1988) social-capital argument that trust, norms, and reciprocity are built through repeated interaction rather than declared in a single encounter, and Bourdieu's (1986) framing of social capital as accumulated through durable networks of relationships rather than instantaneous exchange.

4.6.4.2 Heterogeneous participant motivation

A theme that complicates the literature's more uniform treatment of elite sport networking is Craven's insistence that "not every Indonesian golfer who joins this type of tour is interested in business networking" some participants "simply wanted to play golf and enjoy being in Australia." This bifurcation between a golf-and-tourism segment and a golf-and-business segment is not addressed explicitly in the conceptual framework's treatment of business networking as economic diplomacy, and represents a genuine empirical refinement: the diplomatic and economic value of the platform is not evenly distributed across all participants but concentrated among a self-selecting subset.

This internal heterogeneity among participants carries significant theoretical implications that the dominant literature on sport-as-diplomacy has largely failed to interrogate. Scholars such as Murray and Price (2020) tend to treat elite sporting events as inherently instrumental platforms spaces in which economic and diplomatic transactions are assumed to occur as a natural by-product of co-presence and shared activity. Yet Craven's finding destabilises this assumption by revealing that motivation is not uniform across participants, and that the diplomatic utility attributed to the platform at the aggregate level may not accurately reflect the lived experience or intentionality of individuals within it. In other words, the platform produces diplomatic and economic value, but it does so unevenly, and the mechanisms through which that value is generated are far more contingent than the existing literature implies.

This raises a deeper methodological concern: if studies of sport diplomacy conflate the characteristics of the platform with the motivations of its participants, they risk committing what Hay (2002) describes as a structural fallacy, attributing agency and intentionality to a system or institution rather than to the actors who constitute it. A golf tour may be designed and marketed as a vehicle for Indonesia-Australia business networking, but design intent and participant motivation are analytically distinct categories. The failure to disaggregate these two levels of analysis produces an inflated account of the tour's diplomatic function, one that overstates the degree to which economic diplomacy is actively practised rather than merely made available as an option.

Furthermore, the self-selecting nature of the business-oriented subset identified by Craven invites scrutiny of the conditions under which that selection occurs. Who, precisely, are the participants who engage the tour's networking infrastructure, and what structural factors, professional background, organisational affiliation, prior social capital, or familiarity with

Australia predispose certain golfers toward instrumental participation while others remain oriented toward leisure and recreation? Without systematic attention to these questions, the causal claim that golf tourism contributes to bilateral economic diplomacy remains empirically underspecified. The tour may function as an enabling environment, but enabling environments do not determine outcomes; they merely expand the range of possibilities available to actors who are already disposed to act upon them.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that Craven's empirical observation, while presented as a secondary qualification, is in fact analytically central to any rigorous account of how and for whom the tour operates as a form of economic diplomacy. A more theoretically robust framework would need to move beyond treating participant heterogeneity as a marginal footnote and instead incorporate it as a constitutive feature of the analysis one that demands differentiated explanations for differentiated outcomes rather than a single, undifferentiated account of the tour's diplomatic value.

4.6.4.3 Emergent, unplanned network value

The most theoretically interesting finding in this section is the account of an informal conversation, arising outside the structured Consulate program, that developed into a follow-up discussion around a potential film project on the historic trade and cultural relationship between Makassan seafarers and Aboriginal communities in northern Australia. Craven emphasizes that this idea "was not part of the original golf itinerary but emerged naturally through extended interaction," and that it was subsequently followed up rather than left as a one-off remark. This illustrates Granovetter's (1985) concept of embeddedness that economic and creative opportunities arise from ongoing social relationships rather than being computed independently of them and demonstrates that the

value generated by leisure-based diplomacy is not confined to the trade and investment sectors anticipated by the conceptual framework, but can extend into cultural and creative-economy domains not originally specified in Table 2.1.

4.6.4.4 Structured versus organic networking as complementary mechanisms

Craven distinguishes the Consulate evening, where "business discussions became naturally more direct because participants understood that networking was one of the purposes of the evening," from the golf and travel component, which "created the time and informal setting for unexpected ideas to emerge." The two mechanisms are presented as complementary rather than substitutable: structured networking provides breadth and deliberate introduction, while unstructured leisure time provides depth and the conditions for serendipitous discovery.

This distinction maps closely onto a growing body of organizational and innovation research that treats formal and informal interaction not as competing modes but as functionally distinct mechanisms that produce different kinds of value. Structured settings such as the Consulate evening operate on an explicit, mutually understood purpose: because every participant knows in advance that the occasion exists for networking, the interaction can proceed directly to commercial substance without the social cost of first establishing that business talk is appropriate the equivalent of what recent innovation-ecosystem scholarship describes as the role of formal networks in providing the coordinated infrastructure needed to direct participants efficiently toward specific goals. The golf and travel component instead operates on Craven's logic of unplanned emergence, which research on serendipitous informal knowledge-sharing interactions describes empirically: interactions that arise spontaneously, without a stated commercial agenda, are significantly more likely than planned interactions to connect participants who are categorically, socially, or

organizationally distant from one another, and thereby more likely to surface genuinely novel ideas rather than confirm ideas participants already expected to discuss. Field studies of informal, unplanned contact including work tracking how unstructured breaks and casual encounters between otherwise-unconnected colleagues improve downstream collaborative performance reinforce why Craven treats the "time and informal setting" of the golf and travel itinerary as functionally necessary rather than merely pleasant: the absence of an explicit networking frame is precisely what permits the kind of loosely-guarded, exploratory conversation that a declared business session tends to foreclose.

Read together, this literature suggests the reason Table 2.1's linear structure understates what Craven describes: formal and informal interaction are not sequential inputs to a single output but two distinct generative mechanisms operating on the same participant pool at the same time, each compensating for a limitation of the other. Structured networking guarantees that relevant participants are deliberately introduced to one another, but the explicit commercial framing can constrain participants to safe, already-anticipated topics; unstructured leisure time removes that constraint and opens space for unexpected connections, but without the Consulate evening's prior act of deliberate introduction, there is no guarantee that the "right" people are even present to have those unexpected conversations in the first place. In this sense, curation and the structured/unstructured distinction are nested conditions rather than independent variables: curation determines who is in the room across both settings, while the coexistence of a structured and an unstructured setting within the same itinerary determines what kind of value deliberate matching versus serendipitous discovery that curated pool can actually produce. A revised version of the conceptual framework might therefore represent "leisure" and "business networking" not as adjacent rows feeding a shared outcome, but as two interacting channels operating concurrently

on a common, curated participant base, with the golf-diplomacy platform's overall value emerging from their interaction rather than their sum.

4.5. Implications for Indonesia–Australia Relations

4.5.1 A relational layer beneath formal diplomacy

Craven's overall assessment is that "formal diplomacy establishes the framework. Golf can help build the personal relationships that operate within that framework" trade agreements make commerce easier but do not determine who chooses to trade with whom. This is a direct, practitioner-level restatement of the people-to-people diplomacy literature's core claim (Melissen, 2005; Keohane & Nye, 1977) that sustainable bilateral relationships depend on societal trust and grassroots familiarity operating alongside, and sometimes independently of, official channels reinforcing McRae's (2017) observation that social and relational infrastructure has historically helped stabilize the Indonesia–Australia relationship through periods of formal friction.

4.5.2 Cumulative, longitudinal impact logic

Craven is careful to bound the diplomatic significance of a single pilot event: "one small event will not change the overall bilateral relationship." Its significance, in his account, is conditional on iteration an annual event that consistently connects twenty to thirty relevant participants could, over several years, produce "a substantial network of people who know and trust counterparts in the other country." This claim rests on a temporal logic rather than a scale logic: Craven is not arguing that a bigger single event would generate the needed trust faster, but that trust specifically requires repetition across separate occasions. This is consistent with Putnam's (2000) treatment of social capital as a stock that accumulates through repeated interaction rather

than a one-time output, and it finds independent support in more recent international-relations scholarship on interpersonal trust-building between state and non-state actors. Work on social bonding in diplomacy has shown that, unlike one-off transactions, the development of durable interpersonal relationships between counterparts typically depends on iterative personal interaction across multiple meetings, in which each subsequent encounter builds on the positions and rapport established in the previous one the often-cited case being the four Reagan–Gorbachev summits between 1985 and 1988, where a cumulative chain of face-to-face meetings gradually converted strategic distrust into a working relationship of trust. Public-diplomacy scholarship converges on the same point from a different angle, arguing that face-to-face exchange has a transformational effect on trust between state and non-state actors that is not easily replicated by digital or single-instance contact, since credibility in business, advocacy, and diplomatic partnerships is established cumulatively rather than declared. More recent trust research reinforces why this cumulative mechanism matters for a mixed leisure-business platform like Marsh Golf: with generalized cross-group trust increasingly fragile recent global trust data show a majority of people now hesitant to trust counterparts who hold different values, information sources, or backgrounds business-to-business relationship-building of the kind Craven describes cannot rely on a single encounter to overcome that baseline wariness, and instead depends on the kind of proximate, repeated contact that lets counterparts accumulate direct evidence of each other's reliability over time.

In this sense, rather than existing independently of the curation logic previously discussed, Craven's iteration argument builds upon it: curation decides who accumulates ties at each edition, while iteration decides whether those ties can compound into stock instead of resetting with each new, differently-composed cohort. Well-matched strangers are produced by a well-curated but

non-repeating event; familiar faces with no economic value are produced by a repeated but uncurated event. The only combination that simultaneously satisfies the temporal condition (Putnam's and the diplomacy-trust literature's accumulation argument) and the compositional condition (Uzzi's structure-and-composition argument) is Craven's suggested annual cadence applied to a stable, sector-matched participant base. This suggests that any assessment of the platform's economic-diplomacy function against Table 2.1 should be carried out as a multi-year trajectory in which participant continuity, not just participant selection, is itself a variable to be tracked. It also positions Marsh Golf Leisure's diplomatic value as intrinsically longitudinal rather than event-bound.

4.5.3 Spillover into Subnational Government Engagement

The adoption of the event by subnational government actors is a conclusion that the conceptual framework did not immediately predict: Both the Tasmanian and Victorian governments have expressed support thus far after Par1 briefed them on the pilot's results and utilized it as a proof of concept for potential advertising and destination-promotion support. An extension of Murray's (2012) hybridization argument, which holds that informal, non-state-initiated activity generates enough demonstrated value to attract formal government attention, this represents a form of escalation from track-two, privately organized engagement toward state-adjacent institutional interest as opposed to the more frequently studied reverse sequence in which states initiate sport diplomacy programs from the outset.

This discovery is theoretically noteworthy because of the directionality of its emergence rather than just the existence of government interest. According to Grix and Houlihan (2014) and Pigman (2014), the traditional model in the literature on sport diplomacy places the state as the

initiating actor, the entity that determines a strategic goal, creates a programmatic vehicle, and recruits athletic organizations or commercial operators as implementing partners. This order is completely reversed in the Par1 scenario, where a privately planned and carried out pilot produced visible results, such as participant numbers, economic activity, and bilateral goodwill, which the government could then interpret as proof of scalable diplomatic and promotional value. In this regard, the case goes beyond simply expanding Murray's (2012) hybridization argument; rather, it pinpoints a particular generative mechanism through which hybridization takes place, namely the demonstration effect, in which non-state actors generate proof-of-concept evidence that reduces the epistemic threshold for government actors to commit institutional resources and reputational endorsement.

The way the relationship between institutional involvement and legitimacy is theorized is likewise affected by this bottom-up trend. In the traditional top-down paradigm, government involvement gives the activity legitimacy right away, and the state sponsorship of the sporting or cultural program contributes to its diplomatic credibility. In the Par1 situation, the order is reversed: government interest came about as a result of legitimacy rather than as a prerequisite, and legitimacy was first established through proven results at the private level. This indicates that, contrary to what much of the literature now in publication says, the causal relationship between institutional endorsement and diplomatic credibility is bidirectional and dependent on the caliber and visibility of the evidence that non-state actors are able to generate. Private actors are better equipped to win over state-adjacent support without being subject to state control if the proof-of-concept is stronger and easier to read.

An additional analytical feature that requires careful consideration is introduced by the engagement of subnational rather than federal government entities. Since their institutional responsibilities are focused on economic growth, tourism promotion, and incoming investment rather than bilateral diplomacy as such, Victoria and Tasmania are not foreign policy actors in the traditional sense. Therefore, rather than a diplomatic justification in the traditional sense, their stated support for the Par1 pilot represents an instrumental calculus based on domestic economic interest. This distinction affects how the case is theorized: the transition from private to state-adjacent engagement does not clearly represent a shift toward formal diplomacy if the governmental interest drawn by the pilot is primarily tourism-promotional rather than diplomatically motivated. Rather, it might be better described as a convergence of the tour's economic and diplomatic functions, with subnational governments responding to the latter while private actors and their bilateral networks continue to dominate the former.

However, this convergence does not always mean that the case is theoretically limited. Conversely, it highlights the multifaceted complexity of modern sport diplomacy in federal political systems, where several governmental levels have distinct but sometimes complimentary interests in the same endeavor. A federal government might engage a golf tour as a soft power instrument oriented toward bilateral relations with Indonesia; a state government might engage the same tour as a destination-marketing platform oriented toward inbound tourism revenue; and a private organiser might engage it as a business development vehicle oriented toward commercial networking. Murray (2012) highlights but does not fully explain the hybridized model, which is characterized by the fact that these rationales are not mutually exclusive and can coexist inside a single platform without intentional coordination. The Par1 instance provides a unique empirical insight into how these various rationalities interact and, in some situations, mutually reinforce one

another in the absence of centralized design because it has drawn attention from subnational governments without federal guidance.

Future research should investigate whether the stated support of the governments of Victoria and Tasmania will result in formalized institutional commitment funding agreements, co-branding arrangements, or policy frameworks, or if it will stay at the level of informal endorsement. This is an empirically open question. Theoretically, this divergence is important because it establishes whether the Par1 model is a long-lasting hybridization or just a contingent alignment of interests that has not yet been institutionalized. The tour will have fully transitioned from a track-two private initiative to what could be called a track-one-and-a-half arrangement if government support is formalized. This arrangement is embedded within a collaborative structure that utilizes the resources and legitimacy of both domains, but it is neither fully state-directed nor fully autonomous. The scenario will be theoretically informative as an example of proven value that generates interest without producing commitment if support stays informal. This distinction has important implications for the model's replicability in other bilateral athletic contexts.

4.6. Cross-Cutting Theme: Curation as a Boundary Condition

According to Craven's perspective, the framework that runs from business-value creation to suggestions for upcoming editions returns to a single unifying claim: golf is a necessary but insufficient condition for diplomatic or commercial worth. "Golf can be an effective medium for bilateral business contact, but golf alone does not provide the commercial value," he states bluntly. The participants provide the value. If left unchecked, an undifferentiated participant pool actually undermines the platform's value proposition because paying participants—especially Australian

businesspeople who have no declared interest in Indonesian markets—see fewer and fewer reasons to attend an event that has no bearing on their business objectives.

Explicit curation logic is Craven's suggested solution, which would divide up future editions into "Golf & Tourism" and "Golf & Business" streams, match Indonesian and Australian participants based on industry and commercial significance, and formally involve state tourism and trade agencies to improve delegation quality. This suggestion is not unique to Craven's own work; rather, it reflects a more general change over the past ten years that has been noted in the literature on sport diplomacy and event management. According to Murray and Price (2020), sport fosters transient, informal ties that can develop into formal, long-term ones. However, these interactions are conditional rather than automatic, and curation plays a crucial role during the development stage. Instead of treating sporting contact as diplomatically or commercially self-sufficient, Australia's own Sports Diplomacy 2030 framework operationalizes this insight at the policy level by integrating trade, tourism, and foreign-affairs objectives into sporting engagement to strengthen Australian sport's capacity to represent the country globally, build links with neighbors, and maximize trade, tourism, and investment opportunities.

This reframes Table 2.1's conceptual architecture in an important way. The table presents sport as symbolic diplomacy, leisure as informal engagement, and business networking as economic diplomacy as three parallel, mutually reinforcing components of a single platform. Craven's account, read against this wider literature, suggests these components are not automatically reinforcing; their convergence is conditional on deliberate participant selection. Without curation, the leisure and symbolic dimensions of the event can still function participants still experience Australia's hospitality and golf courses, and trust can still form within the

Indonesian delegation itself, but the transnational business-networking dimension, and by extension the economic-diplomacy function specified in the framework, depends on a prior act of relational engineering that sits outside the golf activity itself.

Contemporary network-embeddedness scholarship in international business supports this reading at a more theoretical level. A recent systematic review of the network-embeddedness construct in IB notes that a tie's strength reflects the accumulated history of interaction between nodes and that these relational and structural dimensions of embeddedness develop over time rather than arising automatically from co-presence, and further observes that a firm's prior relational position, typically embedded in home-country networks, does not automatically transfer across borders because it lacks visibility in the host context a dynamic directly relevant to an Indonesia–Australia platform where Indonesian delegates' domestic business standing carries no default legibility to Australian counterparts absent an intermediary who curates the match. This is consistent with, and extends, Uzzi's (1997) foundational argument that the productivity of interfirm networks depends on the structure and composition of ties rather than merely their existence.

The event-management literature on business matchmaking makes the mechanism even more concrete. Structured B2B matchmaking is now understood in the industry and applied-research literature as a distinct discipline from open networking, characterized by participant profiling before the event, a matching step whether algorithmic or manually curated that identifies complementary pairs, and scheduled meetings so that participants arrive already knowing whom they will meet and why, precisely the segmentation-and-matching logic Craven proposes for future editions. Practitioner and applied-research accounts of this shift converge on a "hybrid" model in which AI-assisted matching is fine-tuned by experienced event organizers, blending data-driven suggestions with human curation to produce higher-quality matches a description that maps closely

onto Craven's own role in the case as the human broker of Indonesian–Australian pairings, in the absence of any algorithmic infrastructure. At the same time, this literature flags a risk that Craven's proposal must guard against: curation built on shared industry, language, or seniority can lapse into homophily, since participants tend to find similarity along these dimensions comfortable, and a matching rule optimized only for shared interest can inadvertently reproduce that homophily rather than generate productive new connections. Applied to Marsh Golf, this suggests Craven's "Golf & Business" stream needs deliberate design not merely to sort participants by sector, but to preserve enough cross-sector and cross-national variation that the platform still generates new ties rather than simply reconfirming existing ones.

Taken together, this body of work spanning sport diplomacy policy (Murray & Price, 2020; DFAT's Sports Diplomacy 2030 framework), international-business network theory (Uzzi, 1997; Galizzi et al., 2026), and applied event-matchmaking research (2023–2026) converges on the same structural claim Craven makes from practice: relational value in mixed leisure-business platforms is not emergent from co-presence but engineered through prior, intentional participant design. Future applications of the study's conceptual framework should therefore treat curation, or intentional network composition, as a moderating variable between the leisure/symbolic layer and the economic-diplomacy outcome and, drawing on the matchmaking literature's homophily warning, should specify curation as balancing *relevance* (shared sector, complementary commercial interest) against *diversity* (cross-national, cross-sector exposure), rather than assuming either a direct automatic relationship between leisure and economic diplomacy, or that maximizing similarity among matched participants is sufficient to produce it.

4.7. Mapping Craven's Themes onto the Conceptual Framework

Framework Component (Table 2.1)	Theoretical Anchor	Evidence from Craven Interview
Sport as symbolic diplomacy	Nye (2004); Stoddart (1990)	Golf's extended duration and hierarchy-levelling character; explicit prioritization of attraction over deal-making.
Leisure as informal engagement space	Melissen (2005); Cha (2009)	Five-day shared itinerary (golf, travel, meals) generating organic familiarity independent of the structured program.
People-to-people diplomacy	Putnam (2000); Bourdieu (1986); Coleman (1988)	Trust built through sustained behavioral observation; complementary formal (Consulate) and informal (course) relationship channels.
Business networking as economic diplomacy	Murray (2012, 2018); Granovetter (1985); Uzzi (1997)	Consulate networking evening; emergent Makassan–Aboriginal film project; curation identified as the condition for value realization.
Cultural tourism as image-building strategy	Nye (2004); Grix & Houlihan (2014)	Deliberate positioning of Australia and Tasmania as premium, discovery-oriented golf and tourism destinations.

Source: Researcher

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This research investigated the role of Marsh Golf Leisure 2025 as a premium leisure-based event to connect the Indonesian and Australian business actors. Three purposefully chosen informants Jola Sharon Marsh, the event founder; Peter Craven, the operational partner on the Australian side; and an informant from the Indonesian business community were interviewed in a semi-structured manner to gather data. The primary lesson is that Marsh Golf Leisure does not engage in commerce or diplomacy. Its potential usefulness lies in establishing a high-end, casual setting where carefully chosen individuals can grow accustomed to and trust each other. Compared to a formal conference or reception, golf's duration, lack of urgency, and minimal procedure allow participants to spend hours together, soften hierarchy, and foster relationships more organically. Participant curation, organized networking, and methodical post-event follow-up will determine whether or not that trust translates into business value.

All three narratives concur based on this reasoning. The event was one program that included travel, golf, hospitality, and a business-to-business meeting led by an embassy or consulate. Instead of concentrating on closing deals, the founder and the operational partner purposefully prioritized attractiveness and developing relationships. However, the 2025 edition was a pilot rather than a fully developed platform, with fewer than ten Indonesian people paying to attend, compared to the original estimate of around fifty. This suggests that the event's worth was not ensured by the status of golf or the caliber of the schedule. It concerned who was there, if the organized B2B meeting linked the appropriate counterparts, and whether connections were maintained following the event.

A cultural and creative-economy effort that resulted from casual chat was one example of the unforeseen value that evolved from the various goals of the participants. Additionally, networking value was concentrated among those who came with a business purpose.

According to the study's conclusions, the event should be viewed as a relational basis that enhances formal frameworks like the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and IA-CEPA rather than replacing them. Its significance is cumulative rather than event-specific: a well-run series of editions can create a long-lasting stock of trust among business actors, but a single pilot cannot alter bilateral relations. For organizers and participating businesses, this means that the event's value is planned rather than spontaneous. This thesis examines Marsh Golf Leisure 2025, a privately organized golf and tourism program in Australia and Tasmania, as a platform for building business relations and sports diplomacy between Indonesia and Australia. The findings are that golf is most effective as a high-class casual space to build trust between well-curated participants using business management as a basis for marketing and building trust through sport, but this trust only becomes business value if the participants are selected appropriately, networking is structured, and there is follow-up after the event.

The findings carry four main implications for management. First, on **market segmentation and targeting**, the event should not sell one undifferentiated product; separating a leisure-oriented stream from a business-oriented stream allows each to be priced, promoted, and measured against its own purpose. Second, on **value proposition and partnerships**, formalising cooperation with consulates, state tourism bodies, and trade agencies can lend credibility, widen recruitment, and share promotional costs. Third, on **planning and risk**, organisers should replace optimistic projections with realistic participation targets and contingency plans, since the gap between

forecast and attendance was the pilot's main commercial weakness. Fourth, on performance measurement and relationship management, organisers should track indicators beyond ticket sales, such as the number of qualified introductions, follow-up meetings, and partnerships formed after the event, supported by a participant database and a scheduled follow-up cycle. Together these actions turn a one-off pilot into a repeatable and scalable business offering.

Future editions should split participants into "Golf & Tourism" and "Golf & Business" streams, match business participants by sector, formalise partnerships with consulates and state tourism and trade agencies, set realistic participation targets and maintain a participant database with scheduled follow-upBecause the study is a single-case, retrospective study based on a small number of informants, its findings are transferable mainly to the Indonesia–Australia business context. Future research could follow subsequent editions and include delegate-level perspectives to test whether these relationships turn into measurable business outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the limitations consolidated, future research should track subsequent editions of Marsh Golf Leisure, or comparable premium leisure-based sport-diplomacy platforms, longitudinally, to test whether the cumulative, iterative logic of network-building anticipated by informants in this study is in fact realized over time. Incorporating delegate-level perspectives, through surveys or follow-up interviews with ordinary participants rather than founders and operators alone, would allow the study's design-level theory of the event to be checked against participants' lived experience of it. Comparative studies examining similar platforms across other bilateral relationships would help establish whether the curation effect identified in this study,

whereby economic-diplomacy value depends on deliberate participant matching rather than following automatically from shared leisure participation, holds as a general condition for premium leisure-based sport diplomacy or is specific to the Indonesia-Australia case. Finally, future work could usefully develop quantitative measures of network density, trust, and the conversion of informal relationships into documented business or cultural outcomes, complementing the qualitative, interview-based approach adopted in this study.

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